取材で関東大会に行ってから
1年が経ちました。
長いような短いような‥‥。
そして、漫画の中の夏は
まだまだ続きます。

勝木 光

Baby Steps
ベイビーステップ

SHONEN MAGAZINE COMICS

18

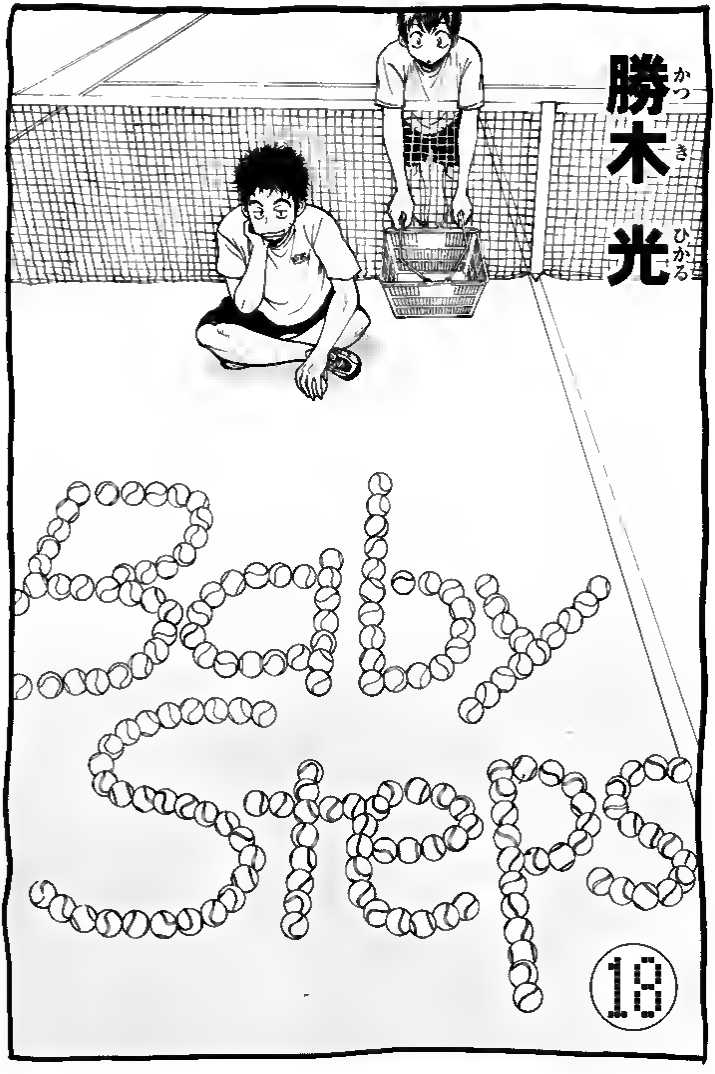
勝木 光

Baby Steps
ベイビーステップ
18
勝木 光

講談社

SHONEN MAGAZINE COMICS

好きなテニスで、好きな人と一緒に‥‥。


勝木光
Baby Steps
18

Baby Steps ベイビーステップ

人物紹介

エーちゃん 丸尾栄一郎

STC所属。「次の全日本ジュニアで優勝、そしてプロへ」が命題。そこで優勝できなければプロを諦めるという条件付きで、テニス最優先の生活を送っている。同じ夢を持つナツは心の支え。ナツとの交際がテニスに好影響!?

ナツ 鷹崎奈津

STC所属。全国トップレベルの選手でプロ志望。理論派・エーちゃんとは真逆の超感覚派で、それが互いに刺激に。ただいま恋もテニスも絶好調!!

青#コーチ

STCでのエーちゃんのコーチ。元プロ選手という経験に裏付けされた指導でエーちゃんをサポート。

佐々木姫子

エーちゃんの試合に必ず駆けつけてくれる心強い応援団。姫子はエーちゃんへの想い実らず失恋。影山は親友。

影山小次郎

Baby Steps

CONTENTS

#162: Good and Evil

#163: Anger and Pressure

#164: How...?

#165: Power of Love

#166: Living Tool

#167: Compilation

#168: Valuable Data

#169: Subconscious

#170: The Current Me

#171: Last Minute Power

to Giant Strides

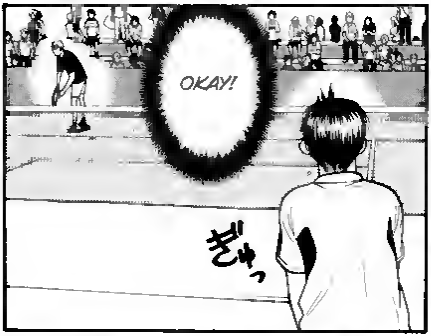
SHOOT!
#162: GOOD AND EVIL

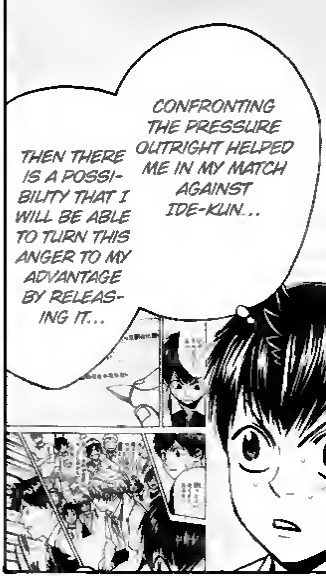
RGH

F-
5 - 3, MARUO.
おお
phew
adidas

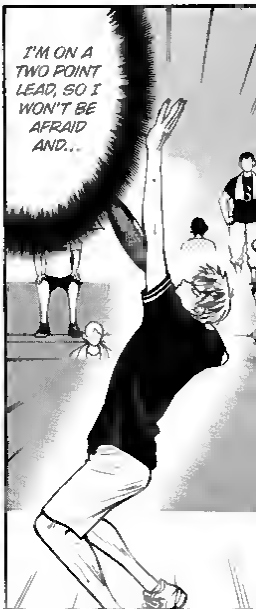
HIS SPORTSMANSHIP HAS BEEN TERRIBLE SO FAR.
HE WAS TOTALLY AIMING FOR THE HEAD.
ザワ
ザワ
ザワ
ホーッ
MARUO, TAKE REVENGE!
NAH, IT'S A MATCH, SO IT'S NOT A PROBLEM.
SHOULDN'T HE AT LEAST APOLOGIZE?
ザワ
ザワ
ザワ
HE HAD HIS EYE ON THE BALL THE WHOLE TIME...
THAT WAS CLOSE ...
ドキ
ドキ
ドキ

...AND DESPITE THAT, HE DOESN'T EVEN TRY TO HIDE HIS MALICIOUS INTENT.
HE SHOULD'VE BEEN ABLE TO MAKE IT THROUGH THE SIDES,
BUT HE CLEARLY WENT FOR MY BODY TO DISRUPT MY THINKING.
LIKE I'LL LOSE TO SUCH DIRTY TENNIS.
YOU HAVE GOT TO BE KIDDING ME.
THEN CAN'T I TRY USING THIS IRRITATION TO MY ADVANTAGE IN THE GAME?
I'VE BEEN TRYING TO STAY CALM THE WHOLE TIME, BUT I'M NOT GETTING THE RESULTS I WANTED.

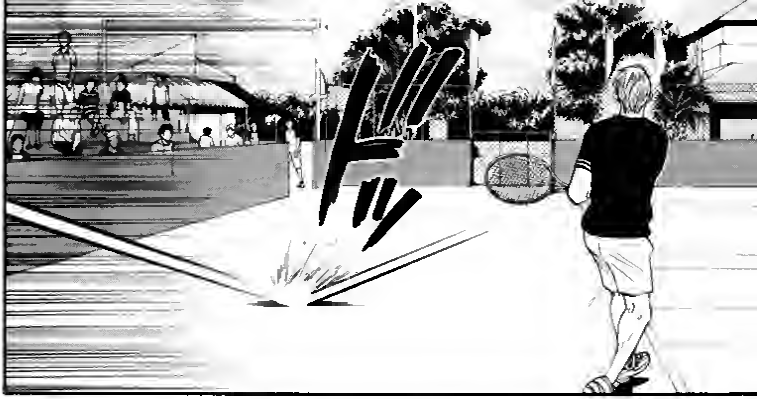

OKAY!


CONFRONTING THE PRESSURE OUTRIGHT HELPED ME IN MY MATCH AGAINST IDE-KUN...
THEN THERE IS A POSSIBILITY THAT I WILL BE ABLE TO TURN THIS ANGER TO MY ADVANTAGE BY RELEASING IT...

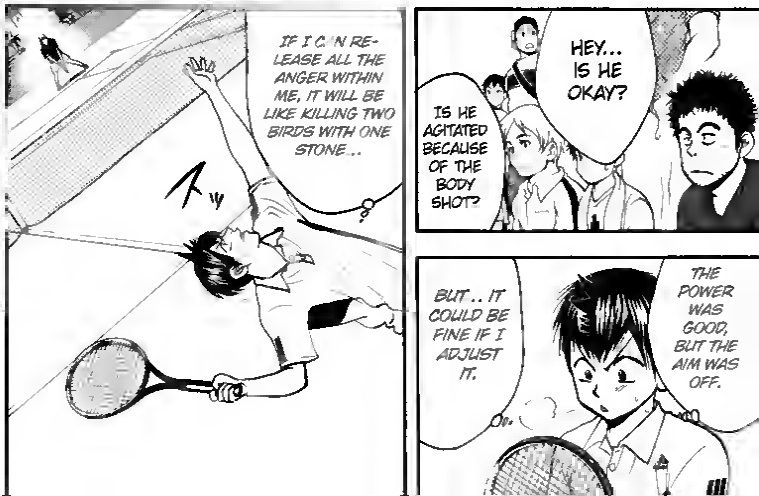
I'LL FOCUS ALL THE ANGER I'VE BEEN HOLDING BACK ONTO MY TARGET...


I'M ON A TWO POINT LEAD, SO I WON'T BE AFRAID AND...

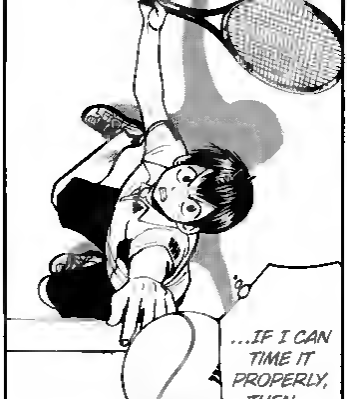
UN-
LEASH
!!!
HA


FU!!
FU!!

.....
OUT! 5 - 4 MARUO.


IF I CAN RELEASE ALL THE ANGER WITHIN ME, IT WILL BE LIKE KILLING TWO BIRDS WITH ONE STONE..
FU!!
HEY... IS HE OKAY?
IS HE AGITATED BECAUSE OF THE BODY SHOT?
THE POWER WAS GOOD, BUT THE AIM WAS OFF.
BUT.. IT COULD BE FINE IF I ADJUST IT.

UNLEASH MY "ANGER"!!!
!!!
ポーン
WOAH

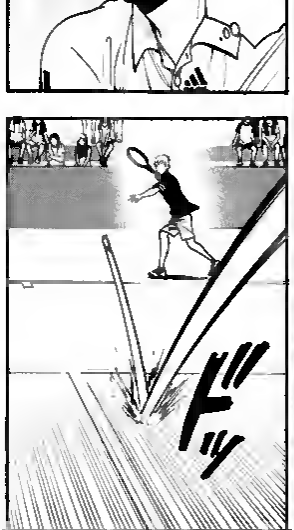

...IF I CAN TIME IT PROPERLY, THEN...

BUT... THE SWING ITSELF WAS POWERFUL.

SHOOT... MY SWING WAS TOO FAST, AND IT HIT THE FRAME.
かぁっ

WAS THAT TOO MUCH SPIN?!

HA
ギュゥン


ドッ

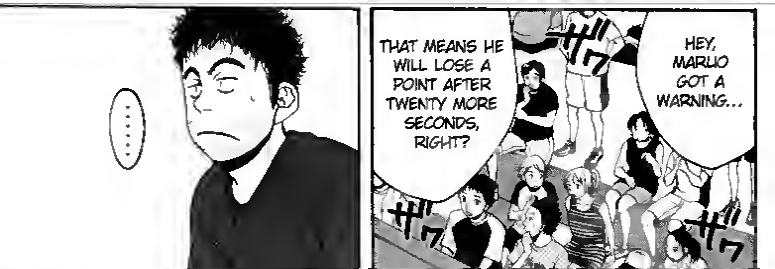
CONSIDERING THE INCREASED SPEED OF MY SWING...
HUMPH
ORAA
OUT!
5 - 5
!!

IT WILL WORK IF I CAN LAND IT, BUT THE ACCURACY WILL BE WAY OFF.
I HAVE POWER, BUT MY TIMING IS COMPLETELY OFF...
NO... "ANGER" ISN'T HELPFUL IN THE MATCH AT ALL.
..MY HEART RATE HAS RISEN, TOO.
MY HEAD IS FEELING HEAVY.
WITH ONLY TWO YEARS OF TENNIS HISTORY.. HE'S PREMATURE ON THINGS HE NEVER EXPERIENCED

I DIDN'T EXPECT IT TO AFFECT MY SUBSEQUENT GAMES, TOO...
I SHOULD TAKE MY TIME ON THIS ONE...
EXCUSE ME, CAN YOU TAKE THE "TIME VIOLATION"?
FIFTEEN SECONDS!
MR. MARUO, YOU'VE BEEN SPENDING A LOT OF TIME IN BETWEEN POINTS, SO PLEASE BE CAREFUL.
IF YOU SPEND MORE THAN TWENTY SECONDS LATER ON, I WILL BE TAKING A WARNING.
AH... YES, I'M SORRY!

NO, NO, DON'T GET MAD. IT'LL MAKE IT WORSE!
...GEEZ, HE REALLY IS HORRIBLE.
I GOT TO DISSIPATE ALL THIS ANGER SOMEHOW
I HAVE TO REFRESH MY HEAD.
THAT JUST MEANS I NEVER THOUGHT OF THE OPTIONS TAKAGI-KUN CHOSE TO WIN THE GAME.
THAT'S RIGHT.. TAKAGI-KUN HAS ALWAYS BEEN WORKING WITHIN THE RULES OF THE GAME SO FAR
AND UNDERSERVE IS A REASONABLE STRATEGY FOR HIM.
IT'S DUE TO MY LACK OF EXPERIENCE THAT I GOT DISTRACTED BY HIS FOOT STUMPS,
IT'S MY FAULT THAT I WASN'T PREPARED FOR IT.
IN THE FIRST PLACE, SINCE I'M THE ONE WHO GAVE HIM A BALL THAT COULD BE AIMED TOWARDS THE BODY,

FIFTEEN SEC-ONDS.
FIVE MORE SECONDS TILL A WARN-ING...
BUT I CAN'T AFFORD TO LOSE A POINT AT 5 - 5...
MR. MARUO,
TIME VIOLATION WARNING!


HEY, MARUO GOT A WARNING...
THAT MEANS HE WILL LOSE A POINT AFTER TWENTY MORE SECONDS, RIGHT?
.....

IN ORDER TO DO THAT, I WILL SPEND THE REMAINING TWENTY SECONDS TO SOOTHE MY MIND..
THE IMPORTANT THING RIGHT NOW IS TO THINK OF THE NEXT POINT AND DEFINITELY SECURE IT.
I WILL GLADLY ACCEPT A WARNING.
I'M IN NO POSITION TO QUESTION HIS INTEGRITY.
IN THE FIRST PLACE, IT'S THE RULES THAT DECIDE GOOD AND EVIL ON COURT...
WILLINGLY ACCEPTING A WARNING IS JUST LIKE TAKAGI-KUN.
I JUST HAVE TO FIGHT WITH MY OWN STYLE, TOO.
TAKAGI-KUN'S JUST FIGHTING WITH HIS OWN STYLE.

まっちり
ふぅ…
トクン トクン
OKAY!
…I'M NOT MAD ANY-MORE!
adidas

WHAT THE HECK IS WITH THAT FACE...
FINE, BRING IT ON...
OKAY, LET'S GO!!!

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ベイビーステップ

RAWs: Share
Cleaner: Stark & MrHame
Translator: Ruggia
Typesetter: CraN
Proofreader: Reika
Q-Checker: LordLestat

#163: ANGER AND PRESSURE
HA
I HAVE FAITH THAT MY BODY WILL UNDERSTAND THAT, TOO, AND...
ANGER WON'T HELP ME WITH ANYTHING...
SERVICE DASH?!

FRAME!!!

6 - S. MARUO.
Tch
T-THAT WAS CLOSE!!
BUT THE REASON I WAS ABLE TO SCORE DESPITE MY STIFF MOVE-MENTS,
WAS BE-CAUSE I MOVED WITHOUT FEAR...

IT TOOK ME THIS LONG TO REALIZE THAT...
I WAS REALLY BLIND ON WHAT'S IMPORT-ANT.
IF I LOSE THIS SET, I WILL BE FIGHTING HEADS ON WITH THAT STAMINA.
THE FRIGHTENING THING ABOUT T. KAGI-KUN ISN'T HIS BAD SPORTSMAN-SHIP, BUT HIS UNWAVERING MOVEMENT.
AND IF I THINK CARE-FULLY,
HIS STAMINA IS THE REAL THREAT.
HUH? I'M START-ING TO FEEL SOME PRESSURE NOW THAT I'VE SUP-PRESSED MY ANGER.
OKAY... I'LL FINISH IT HERE.
...BUT IF I CAN CONTROL THIS PRES-SURE, I CAN USE IT TO MY ADVANTAGE.

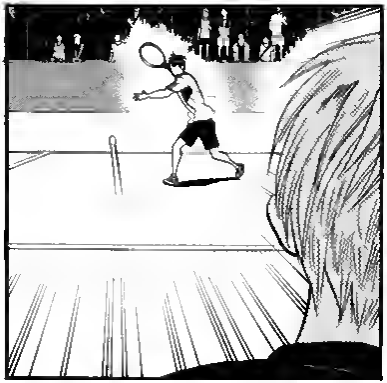
I'LL TAKE HIM DOWN!!
I DON'T KNOW WHAT NABAE SAW IN HIM, BUT...
BUT ONCE HE COMES THIS FAR, ALL THAT'S LEFT IS TO TAKE HIM DOWN HEAD ON.
HE'S HANGING ON LONGER THAN I EXPECTED...
HA

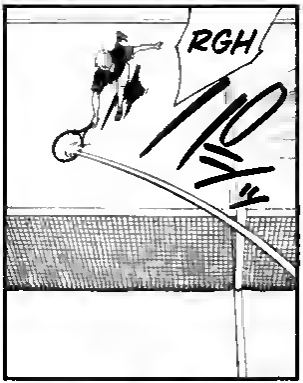
DAH
WHAT ...?
AFTER A STRONG FLAT, I'LL USE SOMETHING I HAVEN'T USED YET TO...
RGH

!!

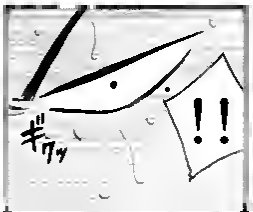
GO FOR THE KILL!!

A DROP SHOT!!




RGH

キュッ


!!
ギクッ

チッ

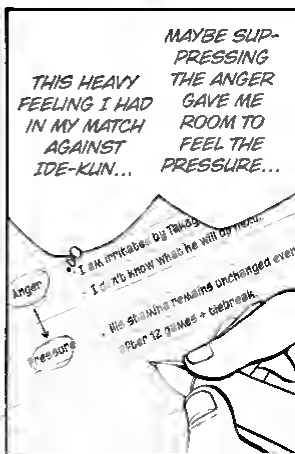
FIRST SET WON BY MARUO. COUNT 7 - 6.

おお
AL-
RIGHT!!
お
お

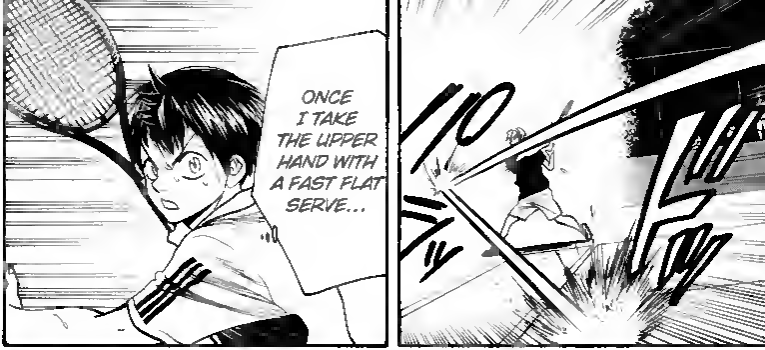
カキカキカキ

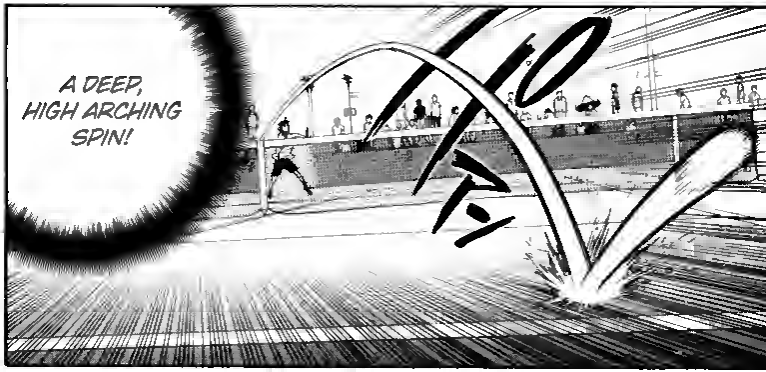
WHY?!
EVEN THOUGH THAT WAS A PRETTY GOOD SERVE...

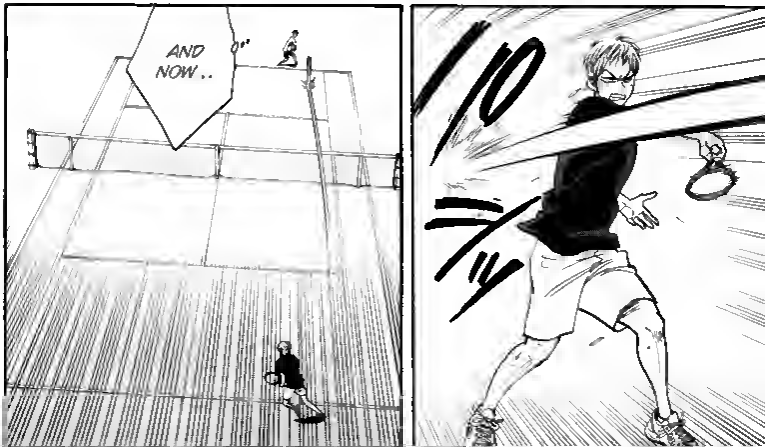
I CAN DO THIS!


THIS HEAVY FEELING I HAD IN MY MATCH AGAINST IDE-KUN...
MAYBE SUP-PRESSING THE ANGER GAVE ME ROOM TO FEEL THE PRESSURE...
Anger
Pressure

I SHOULD RAISE THE STAKES FOR THE SECOND SET...
TIME!
AND IN-CREASE THE GEAR!!

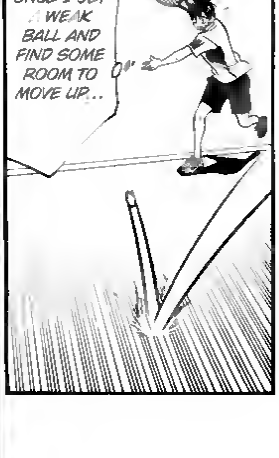

ONCE I TAKE THE UPPER HAND WITH A FAST FLAT SERVE...


A DEEP, HIGH ARCHING SPIN!


AND NOW..

A FAST, SLIDING SLICE WITH A LOW ANGLE!

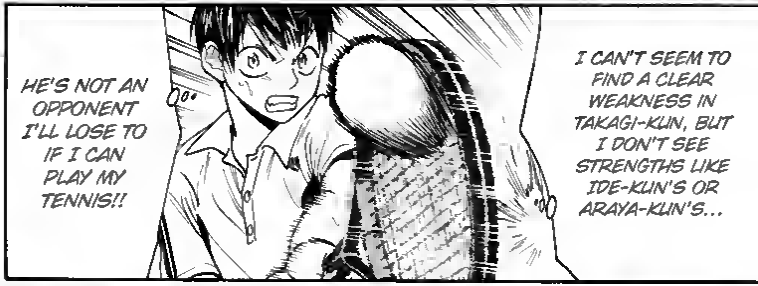
IS HE... REALLY CON-TROLLING ALL THIS?!


ONCE I GET A WEAK BALL AND FIND SOME ROOM TO MOVE UP...

15 - 0.
THIS IS IT!!
MY FASTEST FLAT
TO THE OPEN COURT!!

HA
MY MOVE-MENTS ARE GETTING BETTER!
OKAY! KEEP!

ALL OF A SUDDEN AFTER THE END OF FIRST SET... HOW?!
WHAT HAPPENED TO ALL YOUR ANGER TILL NOW?


HE'S NOT AN OPPONENT I'LL LOSE TO IF I CAN PLAY MY TENNIS!!
I CAN'T SEEM TO FIND A CLEAR WEAKNESS IN TAKAGI-KUN, BUT I DON'T SEE STRENGTHS LIKE IDE-KUN'S OR ARAYA-KUN'S...

ORAA
BUT SINCE I'LL NEVER KNOW WHAT HE'LL DO NEXT, I WILL STAY CAUTIOUS.

CRAP...!!
HA

I CAN'T AFFORD TO LOSE...!!
GAH
BEFORE I PLAY NABAE!!
RGH

W-WASN'T THAT IN?
OUT!
IT WAS ON THE LINE, BUT YOU CAN'T QUESTION THE UMPIRE'S DECISION
IS THE UMPIRE IN A BAD MOOD?
SHIT ...!
GAME, MARUO. COUNT: 2 - 0.

I CAN'T HELP SEEING NABAE IN HIM...

I EARNED A BREAK AT THE START OF SECOND SET!!
I'LL RAISE ANOTHER GEAR!!

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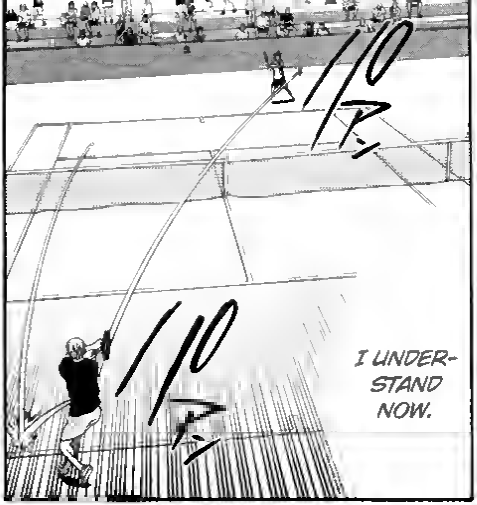
TAKAGI SAKUYA
60
MARUO EIICHIRO
72
#164: HOW...?
IT'S THE SAME AS HIM...
I DON'T KNOW WHAT THEY'VE ANALYZED.
RGH
HA
NO MATTER WHAT I DO...

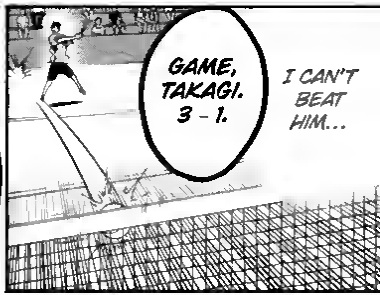
BUT THEY COUNTER IT IN AN INSTANT!!
HA
WHAT'S NEXT AFTER A FAST FLAT?
SLIDING? JUMPING? WILL IT BE FAST? SLOW?

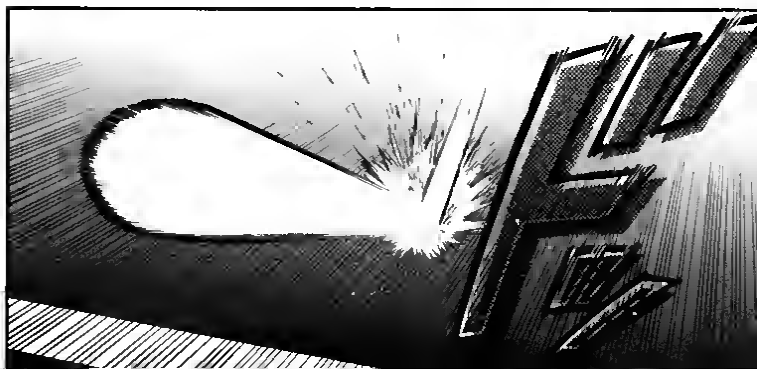
TWO FAST PLAYS IN A ROW!!
GAME, MARUO. 3 - 0. SECOND SET.
YEAH!
SHIT ...!!!


I UNDER-
STAND
NOW.

IT'S
JUST
LIKE
WHAT
HE SAID.
IF YOU
KEEP RE-
LYING ON
CHEAP
TRICKS,
YOUR
TENNIS
WILL STOP
GROWING.

WITH
CHEAP
TRICKS!
GAME,
MARUO.
4 - 1.

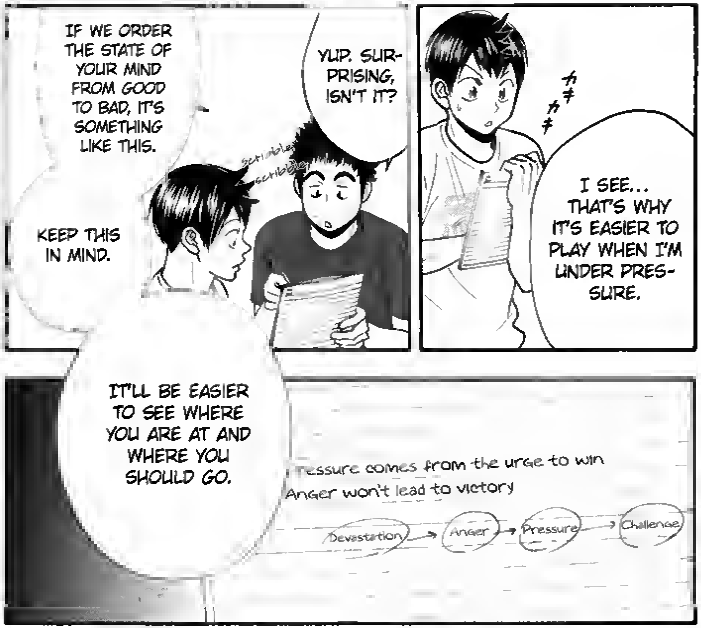

GAME,
TAKAGI.
3 - 1.
I CAN'T
BEAT
HIM...

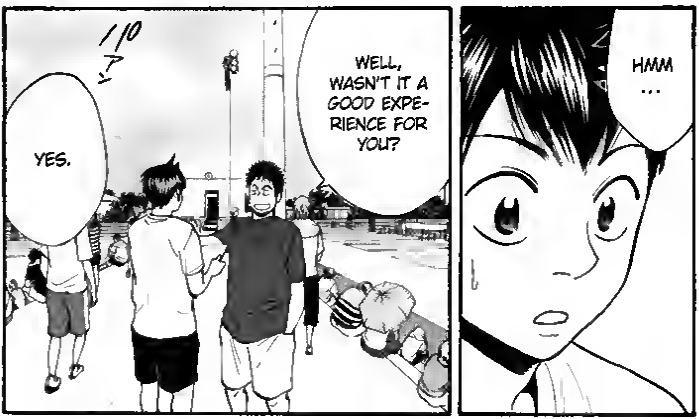


GAME SET AND MATCH WON BY MARUO.
COUNT: 7 – 6, 6 – 2.
THANK YOU SO MUCH.

BUT... I'VE BEEN PRACTICING MORE THAN NABAE.
I MIGHT HAVE USED SOME TIME ON TRICKS AND CHEAP SHOTS,
BUT I DIDN'T SLACK ON STRENGTHENING THE BASICS ...
WHAT MORE AM I SUPPOSED TO DO?
MARUO WON AGAIN.
A NO SEEDER IS IN TOP 4.
SERIOUSLY? DIDN'T HE START TENNIS IN HIGH SCHOOL?
DOES THAT MEAN... HE'S JUST BEEN PLAYING FOR A LITTLE OVER TWO YEARS...?!
Maruo

YES... IT WOULD'VE BEEN DANGEROUS IF I LOST THE FIRST SET.
THAT SEEMED A BIT TOUGH.
THERE ARE PLAYERS LIKE THAT ONCE IN A WHILE,
BUT YOU CAN'T REACH THE TOP IF YOU HAVE TROUBLE FIGHTING THOSE ALL THE TIME.
ESPECIALLY IF YOU PLAN ON FIGHTING OVERSEAS.
WELL, ONE THING I CAN SAY, IS THERE'S NOTHING GOOD AT GETTING IRRITATED DURING THE MATCH.
YES... I REALIZED THAT PAINFULLY.
THE TIMING IS OFF, AND IT'S EXHAUSTING...
I DIDN'T EVEN REALIZE THE PRESSURE THAT WAS ON ME...
PRESSURE COMES FROM YOUR DESIRE TO "WIN", BUT ANGER COMES FROM SOMETHING TOTALLY UNRELATED.


IF WE ORDER THE STATE OF YOUR MIND FROM GOOD TO BAD, IT'S SOMETHING LIKE THIS.
KEEP THIS IN MIND.
YUP. SURPRISING, ISN'T IT?
I SEE... THAT'S WHY IT'S EASIER TO PLAY WHEN I'M UNDER PRESSURE.
IT'LL BE EASIER TO SEE WHERE YOU ARE AT AND WHERE YOU SHOULD GO.
Pressure comes from the urge to win
Anger won't lead to victory
Devastation
Anger
Pressure
Challenge


1/10
YES.
WELL, WASN'T IT A GOOD EXPERIENCE FOR YOU?
HMM...

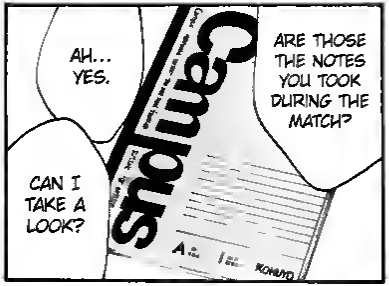
TA-TAKAGI -KUN...?

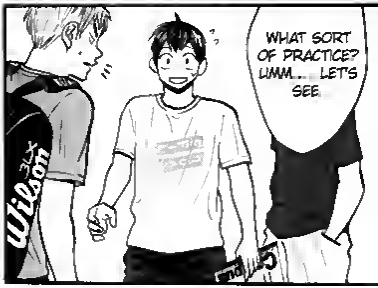
U-UMM... CAN I SPEAK TO YOU FOR A SEC?

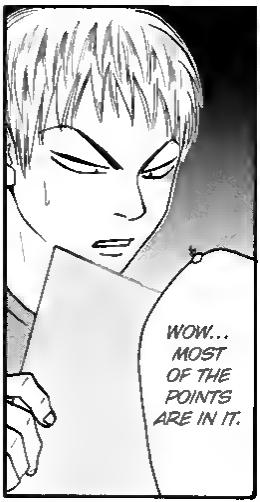
I-IF IT'S OKAY... CAN YOU TEACH ME
WHAT TYPE OF PRACTICE DO YOU DO EVERY DAY?

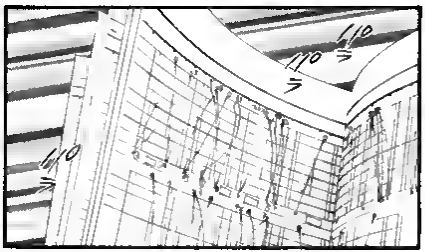
EH...
IS IT TRUE THAT YOU STARTED TENNIS IN HIGH SCHOOL?

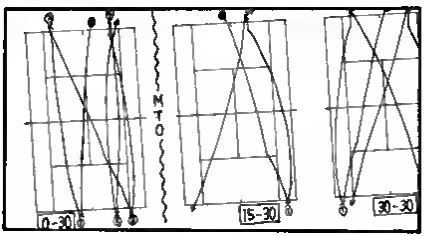
W-WHAT IS THIS?
AH... YES, YOU ARE RIGHT..


ARE THOSE THE NOTES YOU TOOK DURING THE MATCH?
AH... YES.
CAN I TAKE A LOOK?


WHAT SORT OF PRACTICE? UMM... LET'S SEE.


WOW... MOST OF THE POINTS ARE IN IT.




0-30
15-30
30-30

CAUSE YOU TWO HAVE DIFFERENT PERSONALITIES AND DIFFERENT BUILDS.
!
JUST SO YOU KNOW, COPYING WHAT HE DOES WON'T NECESSARILY MAKE YOU STRONGER.
HE BUILT HIS SCHEDULE AFTER THOROUGHLY ANALYZING HIMSELF AND FINDING WHAT TRAINING SUITS HIM THE BEST.
FOCUSING ON HIS METICULOUS PERSONALITY OR STRENGTHENING HIS LACK OF PHYSICAL STRENGTH, ETC.
BY DOING THAT, HE CAME UP WITH HIS OWN TENNIS STYLE.
I'VE BEEN BUILDING MY SCHEDULE BASED ON NABAE'S...
HIS OWN TENNIS STYLE...

HERE... THANKS.
AH... NO PROB-LEM.
AH... OKAY...
TODAY TOO, I'M SURE IT WOULD'VE BEEN TOUGHER FOR US IF YOU TOOK ADVANTAGE OF YOUR INCREDI-BLE STAMINA.
IT'S NOT MY BUSINESS TO TELL YOU WHAT TO DO, BUT I'M SURE THERE'S A STYLE THAT'LL SUIT YOU BEST.
UMM... MAY I ASK YOU SOMETHING?
I HEARD YOU DEFEATED NABAE-KUN ONCE.
HOW DID YOU DO IT?
WHERE DID YOU HEAR THAT?!
I WONDER WHERE YUKICHI-KUN GOT IT...
YOU CAN'T CALL THAT A WIN.
WE KEPT PLAYING ONE SET MATCHES FOR OVER NINE HOURS STRAIGHT AND I FINALLY MANAGED TO WIN ONCE.
Tch.

AND DESPITE THAT, NABAE-KUN LET HIM WIN ONLY ONCE ...
ゴクッ

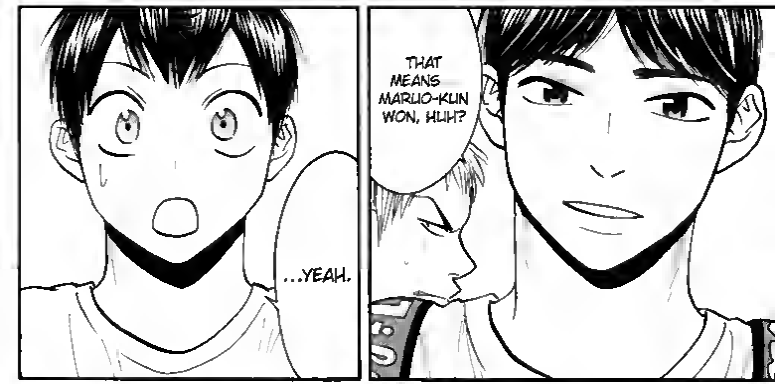
THAT'S WHY I WANTED TO BEAT HIM IN AN OFFICIAL MATCH...

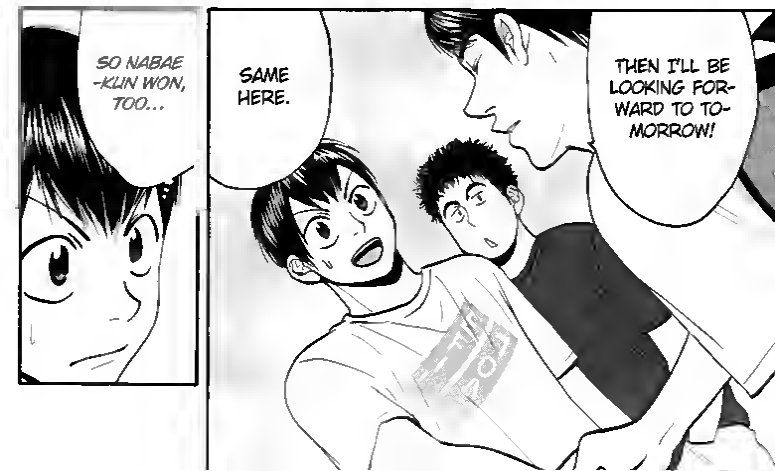
PLAYING UNTIL HE WON... THIS GUY IS AMAZING.

SINCE YOU DEFEATED ME, BEAT NABAE FOR ME, OKAY?

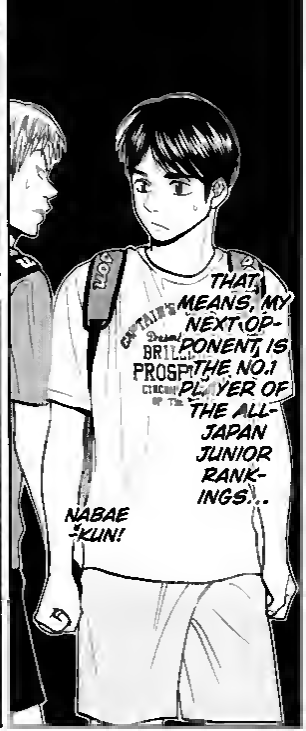
During the match, I...
UMM... I'M SORRY ABOUT A LOT OF THINGS.
NO, IT'S FINE.
THEN SEE YOU

AH... NABAE -KUN.
WHOA
WHO'S DEFEATING WHO?
PROSPECTS


...YEAH.
THAT MEANS MARUO-KUN WON, HUH?


SO NABAE -KUN WON, TOO...
SAME HERE.
THEN I'LL BE LOOKING FORWARD TO TOMORROW!

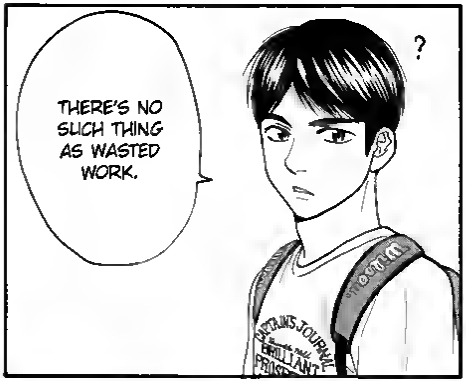
IT WAS MY COMPLETE LOSS LAST YEAR...
I'VE BEEN DOING EV-ERYTHING I CAN SINCE THEN...


THAT MEANS, MY NEXT OP-PONENT IS THE NO.1 PLAYER OF THE ALL-JAPAN JUNIOR RANK-INGS...
NABAE-KUN!

...I FINALLY CAME THIS FAR!

HOW CAN THAT BE JUST TWO YEARS OF TENNIS?
WELL, YEAH.
HE WAS STRONG, RIGHT?

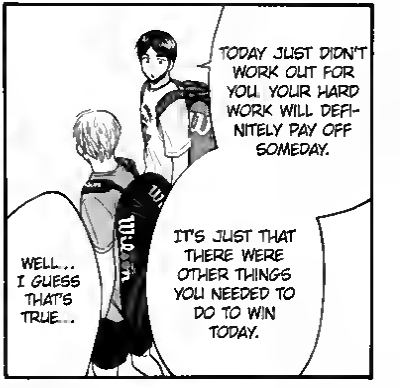
I KNEW HE WAS GOING THROUGH AN INCREDIBLE GROWTH SPEED...
YOU DIDN'T KNOW?
HMM... IS THAT SO...?


THERE'S NO SUCH THING AS WASTED WORK.
?

I GUESS THERE'S A TON OF WASTE IN THE WAY I WORK.
IF I THINK OF IT THAT WAY...

HUH?

ANYWAY... I'LL QUIT RELYING ON CHEAP TRICKS FROM NOW ON!
BRILLIANT PROSPECTS


TODAY JUST DIDN'T WORK OUT FOR YOU. YOUR HARD WORK WILL DEFINITELY PAY OFF SOMEDAY.
IT'S JUST THAT THERE WERE OTHER THINGS YOU NEEDED TO DO TO WIN TODAY.
WELL... I GUESS THAT'S TRUE...

YOU TOLD ME TO STOP TOO!!!

HUH... YOU ARE GONNA STOP THOSE...?

...MAKE UP YOUR MIND.
Whatever
I'M JUST SAYING YOU CAN'T RELY ON THOSE ALONE.

WELL, THAT'S TRUE,
BUT THERE ARE SOME THINGS I WOULD LIKE TO BE ABLE TO USE AS A WEAPON, TOO.

BUT YOUR STRONG DESIRE TO WIN IS DEFINITELY UNRIVALED.
SO I'M SURE YOU'LL GET STRONGER SOONER OR LATER.
C-CUT THAT OUT, IT'S CREEPY.
WHAT..? I WAS PRAISING YOU.
AH, BY THE WAY, THERE ARE SOME THINGS I WANT TO ASK ABOUT MARUO-KUN.
YOU REALLY ARE A SCARY PERSON.

CULPRIT
Nabae, you are undefeated these days
No way, I lost to Takagi pretty recently
HUH?!
Seriously?
Then see ya~

Baby Steps

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Baby Steps

ベイビーステップ

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ガヴ
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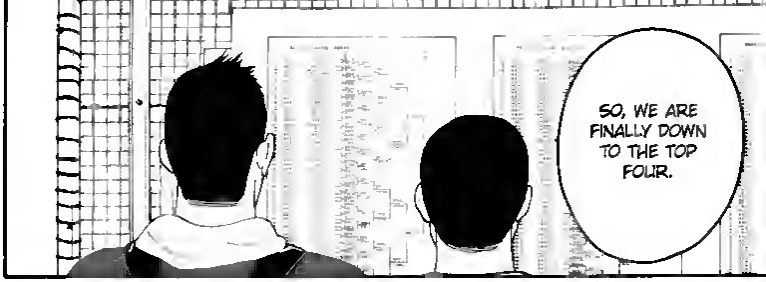
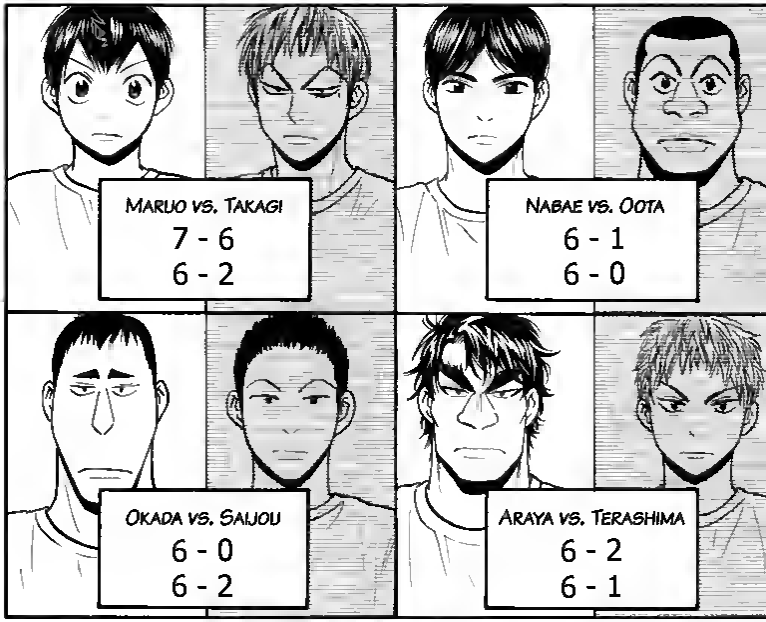
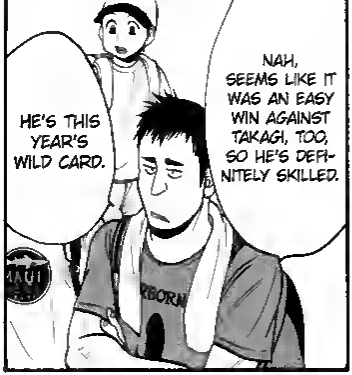
ガヴ
AH... OKADA!
REBORN
#165: POWER OF LOVE

.....
I CAN'T IMAGINE BEATING HIM ANYMORE...
HEY, OOTA.
YEAH, I LOST ALREADY.
YOU FINISHED YOUR MATCH WITH NABAE?


SO, WE ARE FINALLY DOWN TO THE TOP FOUR.


MARUO VS. TAKAGI
7 - 6
6 - 2
NABAE VS. OOTA
6 - 1
6 - 0
OKADA VS. SAIJOU
6 - 0
6 - 2
ARAYA VS. TERASHIMA
6 - 2
6 - 1

SO, HE WON, TOO.


HE'S THIS YEAR'S WILD CARD.
NAH, SEEMS LIKE IT WAS AN EASY WIN AGAINST TAKAGI, TOO, SO HE'S DEFINITELY SKILLED.
OH... THAT MARUO GUY?
I EXPECTED IDE TO MOVE UP FROM THAT BRACKET.

BUT THOSE THINGS CAN CHANGE BASED ON SITUATION...
HE SEEMED TO BE PLAYING A RECKLESS TENNIS TOWARD THE END OF HIS MATCH AGAINST NABAE LAST YEAR,
HA
HA

I SHOULD KEEP AN EYE ON HIM.

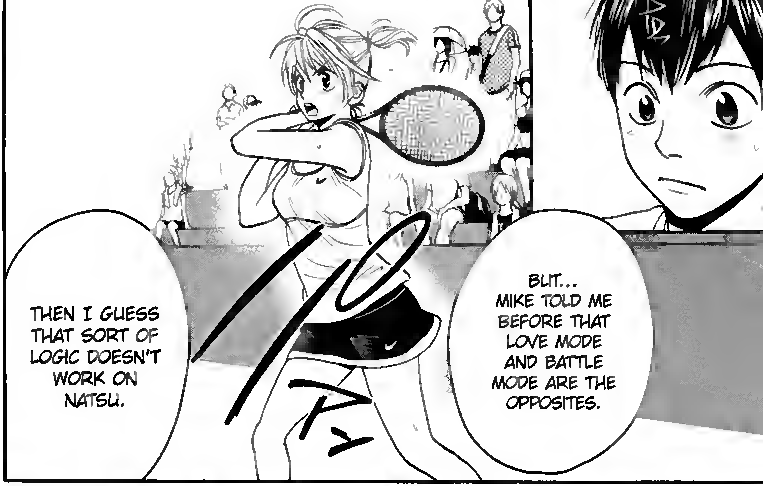
COACH MIURA!

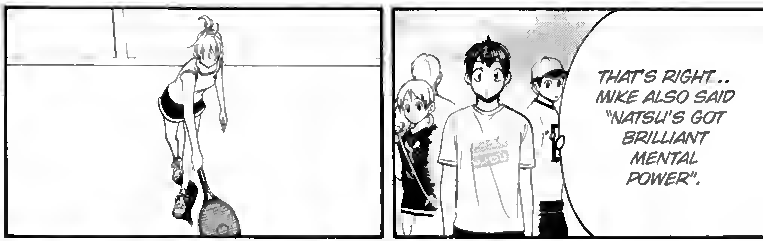
HOW'S NACCHAN?
JUST LOOK.
18 TAKASAKI NATSU
18 NAKAJOU MEGUMI
4
2

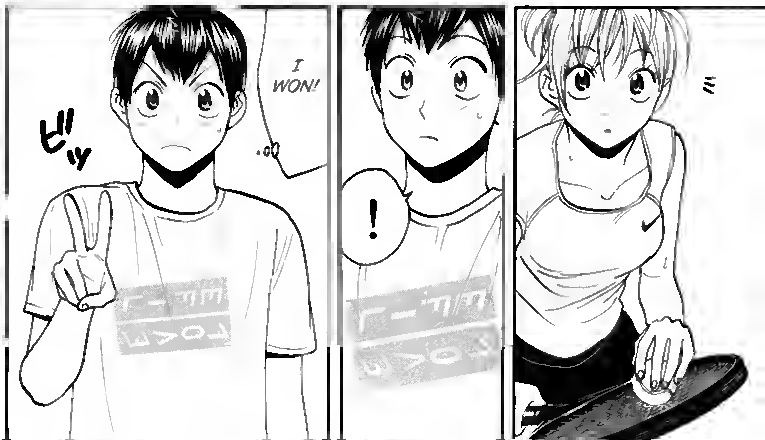
SHE'S SIMPLY TOO STRONG THAT I FEEL BAD FOR HER OPPONENT.

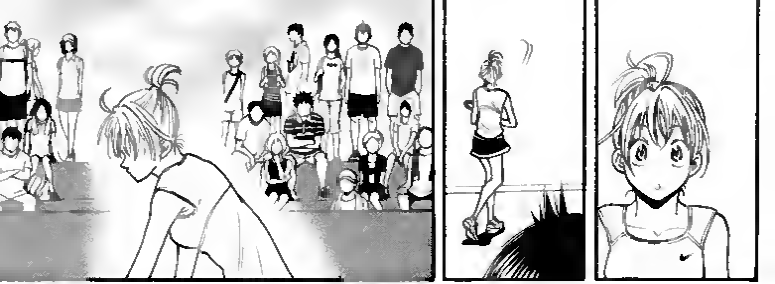
おお
おお
15 - 0.
WOW, INCREDI-BLE!!!
ザワ
ザワ
ザワ
YEAH, IF NATSU WERE TO LOSE, IT WOULD'VE BEEN AGAINST HER.
NAKAJOU-SAN'S THE ONE SHE HAD TROUBLE BEFORE, RIGHT?
BUT EVER SINCE THE START, THE MATCH HAS BEEN ONE-SIDED.
THEIR G!P IS EVEN GREATER THAN WHAT'S BEEN SHOWN ON THE SCORE-BOARD.
ピッ

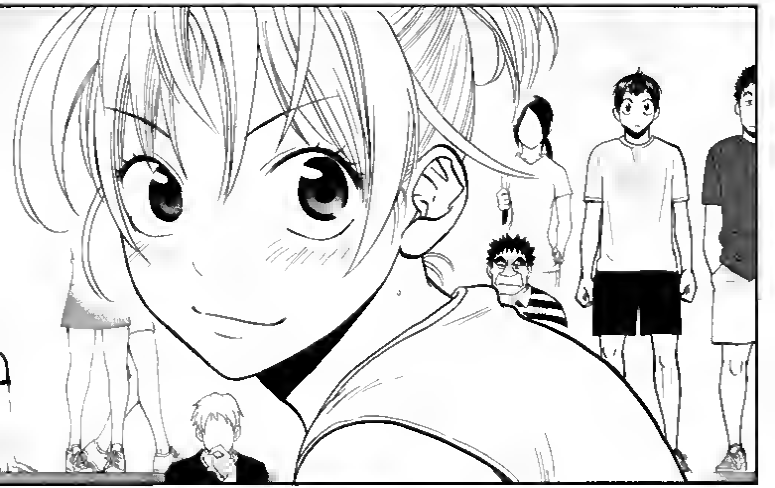
I HEARD THAT SHE'S AT HER BEST,
BUT AMAZING.
GEEZ, IT'S REALLY AMAZING.
THE POWER OF LOVE.
ビクッ
NATSU'S BEEN INCREDIBLE EVER SINCE SHE STARTED SAYING SHE'S GOING OUT WITH YOU.
W-WHAT ARE YOU SAYING ...?
NO, NO. I'M PRETTY SERIOUS.


BUT... MIKE TOLD ME BEFORE THAT LOVE MODE AND BATTLE MODE ARE THE OPPOSITES.
THEN I GUESS THAT SORT OF LOGIC DOESN'T WORK ON NATSU.


THAT'S RIGHT.. MIKE ALSO SAID "NATSU'S GOT BRILLIANT MENTAL POWER".


I WON!
!

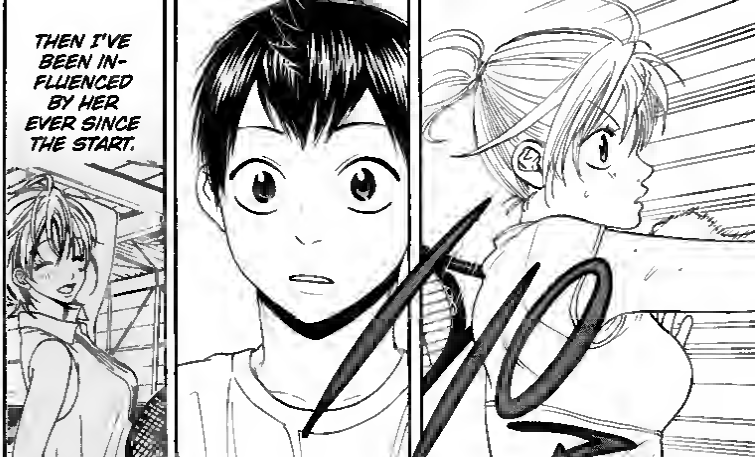




I GUESS IT'S PERFECTLY LOGICAL FOR NATSU.
THAT'S WHY SHE'S AT HER BEST.
WITH HER FAVORITE TENNIS AND WITH HER FAVORITE PERSON.
IT'S FUN AIMING FOR THE SAME GOAL

110
BUT US GUYS CAN'T HELP BUT THINK THAT THOSE TWO ARE DIFFERENT.
EVEN THOUGH IT'S BEST TO BE ABLE TO TURN EVERYTHING TO YOUR ADVANTAGE.
14
THAT'S WHY THERE'S A LOT TO LEARN FROM NATSU.

YOU ARE RIGHT...
AH... YES.
SO GO WATCH HER MATCH AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE.
SHE CAN REALLY TURN YOUR EXISTENCE INTO HER STRENGTH.
IF I AM SOMEHOW RELATED TO HER STRENGTH... I GUESS SO.
R-REALLY?
IT'S AWKWARD FOR ME TO SAY IT, BUT YOU TWO ARE A GOOD COUPLE THAT BRINGS POSITIVE INFLUENCES TO EACH OTHER.

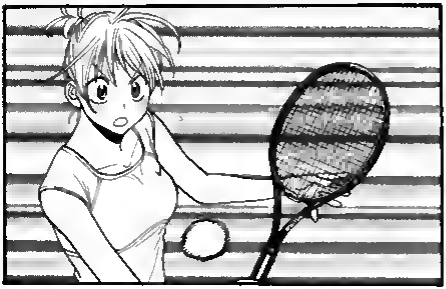

THEN I'VE BEEN IN-FLUENCED BY HER EVER SINCE THE START.

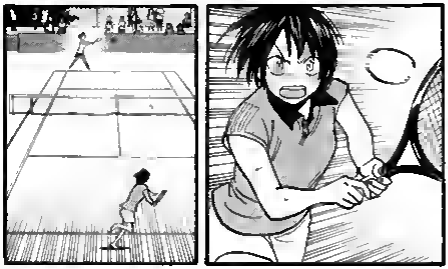
AND LIVELY EXPRESSIONS TOTALLY CHANGED THE WAY I VIEW THE WORLD...
THOSE STRONG EYES...

AND I'VE KEPT CHAS-ING NACCHAN THE WHOLE TIME.
I WAS ALREADY DRAWN TO HER BACK THEN.

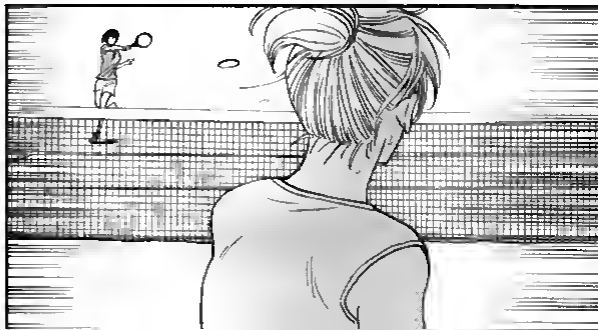
IF THAT CAN HELP MAKE NACCHAN STRONGER, I'LL BE BY HER SIDE AS MUCH AS I CAN.

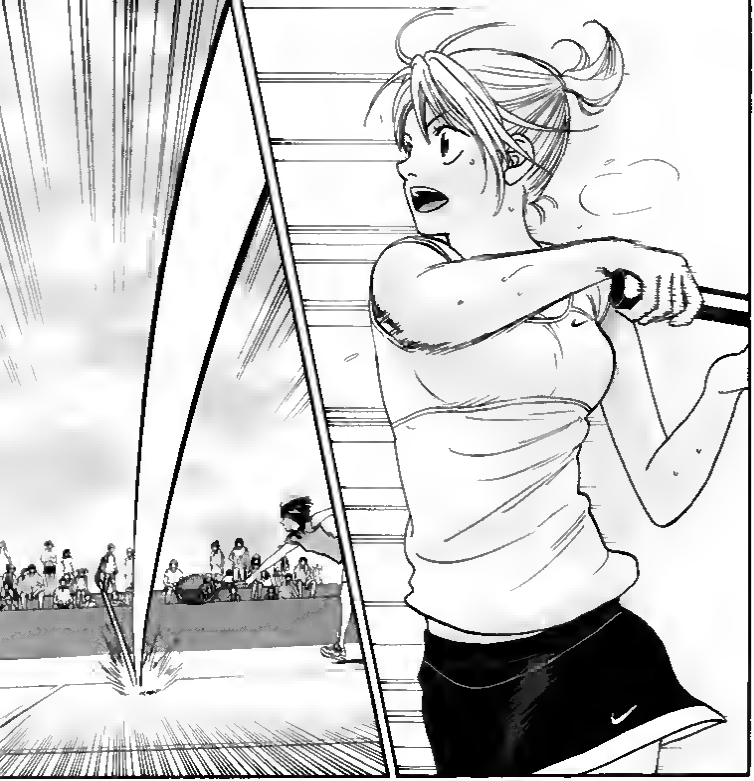
WILL I BE ABLE TO DO THAT ONE DAY?
IT WOULD BE AMAZING IF I CAN TURN THIS FEELING INTO MY STRENGTH ON THE COURT.

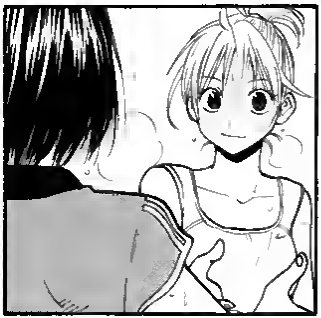




I WANT TO LIVE WITH MY FAVORITE PERSON WITH MY FAVORITE TENNIS, TOO.
I SHARE THE SAME FEELING AS NACCHAN.







AKI NATSU
U MEGUMI

GOOD WORK~
EI-CHAN!!

WE ADVANCED TO THE SEMI-FINALS TOGETHER!!

Y-YEAH... I MANAGED SOMEHOW...
ALTHOUGH I'M BARELY HANGING ON...
NO PROBLEM. NO PROBLEM ♡
BEATING SEEDED PLAYERS ON AND ON, IT'S INCREDIBLE!!

I WISHED I COULD BE MORE LIKE NACCHAN WHEN I SAW YOUR MATCH TODAY
I'M SURE YOU WILL.
HUH...?
BECAUSE I'M BECOMING MORE LIKE EI-CHAN.
L-LIKE WHAT?!
LET'S SEE... MODESTY?
LIAR~
JUST KIDDING~ I MEAN MY TENNIS
THEN, I'LL HEAD DOWN TO THE OFFICE.
Later~!
YEAH.

IS IT TRUE...?
Ah,
THEY WERE TOTALLY INTO EACH OTHER~
ARE THEY GOING OUT?
WHO'S THAT LAME-O WITH TAKASAKI NATSU?
HMMM... TAKASAKI-SAN HAD A BOY-FRIEND, HUH...
IT'S MARUO.
IT'S GOOD TO BE YOUNG~
DID YOU SEE THAT?
ガヤ
ガヤ
ヒソ
ヒソ
ヒソ
THEN WHAT? WERE YOU TWO JUST SHOWING OFF?
I-IT'S NOTHING LIKE THAT!!
A-AOI-SAN!
WOW, IN FRONT OF ALL THESE PEOPLE... THE POWER OF LOVE IS AMAZING~
WHAT A HOPELESS COUPLE.

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Baby Steps

ベイビーステップ

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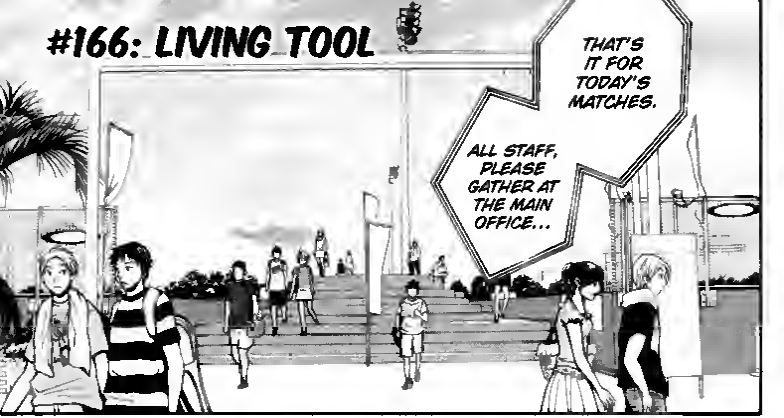
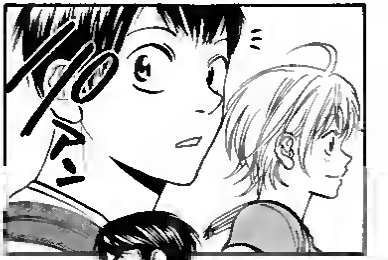
Proofreader: Reika
Q-Checker: LordLestat

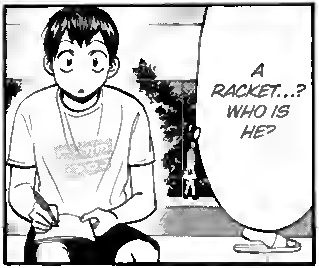
#166: LIVING TOOL

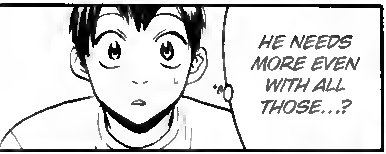


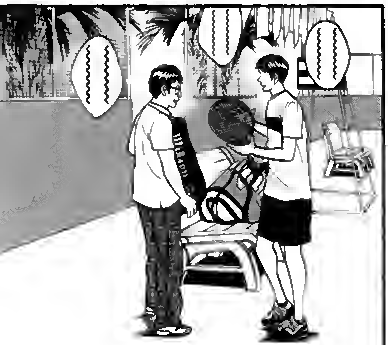


HMM?
HOW DO YOU MOVE SO SMOOTHLY WITHOUT ANY WASTED MOVEMENTS?

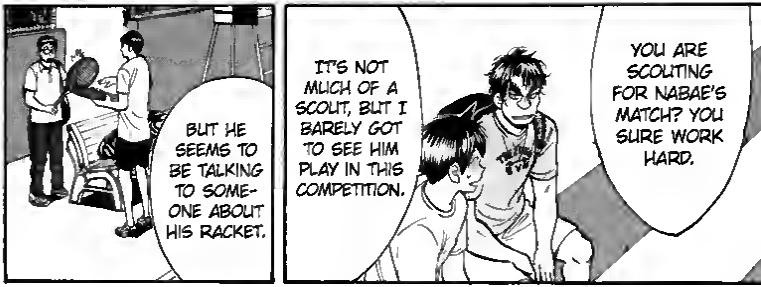
NABAE-KUN, I BROUGHT A RACKET.


A RACKET...? WHO IS HE?


HE NEEDS MORE EVEN WITH ALL THOSE...?



AH, THANK YOU, ARAYA-KUN.
GOOD JOB ON GETTING INTO THE TOP 4!
HEY, MARUO!
THO


BUT HE SEEMS TO BE TALKING TO SOME-ONE ABOUT HIS RACKET.
IT'S NOT MUCH OF A SCOUT, BUT I BARELY GOT TO SEE HIM PLAY IN THIS COMPETITION.
YOU ARE SCOUTING FOR NABAE'S MATCH? YOU SURE WORK HARD.

HIS OBSESSION TOWARDS HIS RACKETS IS QUITE SOME-THING.
THAT'S SOMEONE FROM THE COMPANY THAT MAKES NABAE'S RACKETS.
HMM? HOW DO YOU KNOW?
OH... THAT'S GONNA TAKE A WHILE.

HMM...
INCLUDING ME, IF YOU BECOME A VETERAN AT THE NATIONALS, THERE ARE TIMES WHEN YOU GET ASKED TO USE RACKETS FROM OTHER COMPANIES.
UNDER THE CONDITION THAT YOU HELP THEM WITH THEIR RESEARCH BY GIVING THEM CONSTRUCTIVE FEEDBACK.
EVEN AMONG US, APPARENTLY NABAE'S FEEDBACKS ARE SUPER SPECIFIC WITH DETAILS ON STUFF LIKE WEIGHT, BALANCE, OR STRING TENSION,
SO THE COMPANIES LOVE IT BECAUSE IT HELPS THEM WITH THEIR RESEARCH.
THE TENSION RIGHT BEFORE THE STRING BREAKS IS REALLY NICE.
THE WEIGHT'S FINE, BUT I THINK IT'LL BE BETTER IF IT'S A BIT HEAVIER TOWARDS THE HEAD.
THAT'S WHY THE RACKET HE USES IS SPECIFICALLY TUNED FOR HIS USE.

THERE WAS A TIME WHEN WE WERE BOTH IN A TRAINING CAMP FOR THE JAPANESE NATIONAL TEAM QUITE A WHILE BACK.
A RACKET SPECIFICALLY FOR NABAE-KUN...
Wow
THIS IS THE ONLY ONE I BROUGHT TODAY, SO THIS IS IT FOR ME.
NAH, SORRY.
YOU GOT A SPARE, RIGHT?
HUH? WE JUST GOT STARTED.
WHILE RALLYING WITH HIM HIS STRING BROKE AND...
HUH? AREN'T YOU BEING TOO SENSITIVE?
I CAN'T USE SOMEONE ELSE'S RACKET. IT RUINS MY CONDITION.
I'LL LEND YOU MINE, SO STAY A BIT MORE.
NAH... SORRY.
HUH...? WHY?
Come on

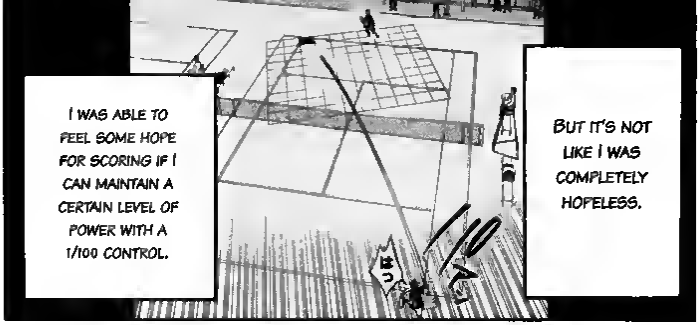
MAYBE, BUT...
I CAN'T HELP FEEL SOME UNEASINESS WHEN I SWITCH BACK TO MY RACKET LATER.
WELL, IF YOU SAY SO...
SORRY, I'LL GO REMOVE THE STRINGS.
EVEN THOUGH IT'S NOT LIKE THERE ARE NERVES ON HIS RACKET.
IT SOUNDS LIKE IT'S HIS OWN HAND.
WELL, I GUESS IT'S SOMETHING SIMILAR.
He's weird, right?
BUT I CAN SORT OF UNDERSTAND HIM.
IF I WATCH NABAE-KUN'S SMOOTH AND DELICATE RACKET SWINGS,
IT DOESN'T FEEL AWKWARD FOR HIM TO TREAT HIS RACKET LIKE HIS OWN BODY.
THAT'S RIGHT. IWAKI-KUN WAS SMILING AS HE WATCHED HIS RACKET, TOO.
IT MUST BE LIKE HIS HAND AND THE RACKET RESONATING WITH EACH OTHER.
ALRIGHT.

IT WILL BE A PRETTY TOUGH MATCH FOR ME, TOO.
AGAINST OKADA, I WON'T BE SATISFIED IF I DON'T TAKE HIM DOWN WITH PURE STRENGTH.
THEN AS FELLOW KANAGAWA PLAYERS, LET'S DO OUR BEST TOMORROW.
I BELIEVE IN THE POSSIBILITY OF THE NEXT ONE BEING THE SECOND COMING OF KANAGAWA FINALS.
SO WATCH OUT.
OKAY!

HMMM?
THAT'S RIGHT. I HEARD THIS PASSING BY, BUT...
ARE YOU SERIOUSLY GOING OUT WITH TAKASAKI NATSU?
That's amazing
IT'S SPREADING?!
flip
Curse

Campus notebook
Depending on the player, he can switch to any play style and still maintain a very high level.
Power, speed, technique, strategy. He can use any of them, and since he mixes them up, I can't even imagine how many cards he has.

Last year, he used a control-focused style to target my weak points and take the lead.
and finished it with a high risk power style to take me down.


I WAS ABLE TO FEEL SOME HOPE FOR SCORING IF I CAN MAINTAIN A CERTAIN LEVEL OF POWER WITH A 1/100 CONTROL.
BUT IT'S NOT LIKE I WAS COMPLETELY HOPELESS.
ぽっ

I MIGHT NEED A GREATER THAN 1/64 CONTROL FOR MY CHANGE OF PACE EVEN DURING REGULAR RALLIES.
I THINK I WILL BE FIGHTING WITH YOU AGAIN SOME-TIME
THAT'S WHY I THINK 1/100 CONTROL WILL BE NECESSARILY AT CRUCIAL MOMENTS EVEN IF IT'S GOING TO BE VERY RISKY

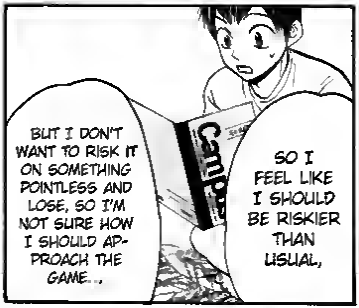
Okay
Umm

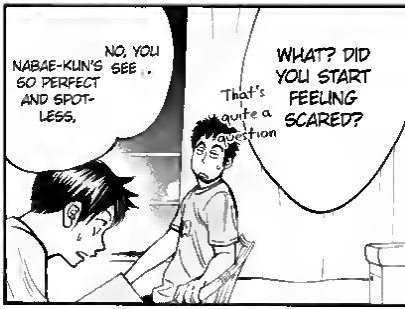
Umm

I LEARNED FROM LAST YEAR THAT I WILL LOSE IF I CAN'T GO THAT FAR...
テニス 25

WHAT DO YOU THINK I SHOULD DO TO DEFEAT NABAE-KUN?
.....

UMM... COACH AOI.
HUH?

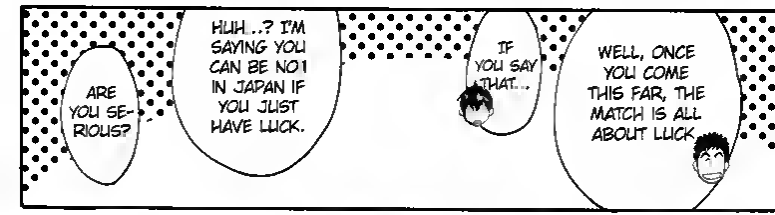

SO I FEEL LIKE I SHOULD BE RISKIER THAN USUAL,
BUT I DON'T WANT TO RISK IT ON SOMETHING POINTLESS AND LOSE, SO I'M NOT SURE HOW I SHOULD APPROACH THE GAME...


WHAT? DID YOU START FEELING SCARED?
That's quite a question
NO, YOU SEE, NABAE-KUN'S SO PERFECT AND SPOTLESS,

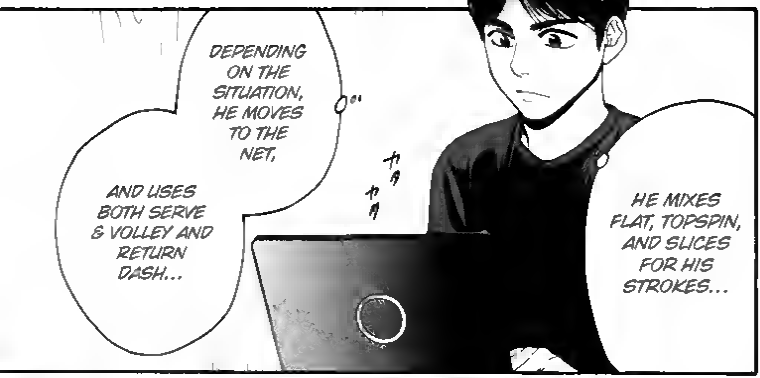
YOU SEEM TO BE ENJOYING YOURSELF.

No
Date 7 22
VS. Nabae Yuu
BUT THERE'S SIMPLY A STRONG DESIRE TO PLAY AGAINST NABAE-KUN,
IT'S NOT LIKE I'M THINKING THAT IT'S OKAY TO LOSE HERE AND WIN AT THE NATIONALS, BUT...
I WONDER WHY...? MAYBE IT'S BECAUSE I'M ALREADY QUALIFIED FOR ALL-JAPAN JUNIOR?
R-REALLY?
AND I GET ALL EXCITED
JUST BY THINKING ABOUT TO-MORROW.
YOU LEARNED FROM YOUR MATCHES, RIGHT? YOU WANT JUST THE RIGHT AMOUNT OF PRESSURE.
Neither too much nor too little.
NAH, I THINK IT'S OKAY.
I SHOULD STAY FO-CUSED..
I'M TOO LAXED, RIGHT?

AREN'T YOU IN THE MOST OPTIMAL "CHALLENGER" STAGE?
IT'LL HELP TO REMEMBER WHAT YOU ARE FEELING RIGHT NOW.
R-REALLY?
WHY DON'T YOU TRY DOING SOMETHING REALLY WILD THAT YOU CAN'T DO UNDER PRESSURE?
L-LIKE WHAT...?
RATHER THAN DIVIDING UP THE COURT, HOW ABOUT TRYING TO AIM FOR THE LINES?
ON THE LINES?! WON'T THAT BE A TOTALLY UNNECESSARY RISK?
YOU'LL NEVER KNOW UNTIL YOU TRY.
Calm
Size


ARE YOU SERIOUS?
HUH..? I'M SAYING YOU CAN BE NO1 IN JAPAN IF YOU JUST HAVE LUCK.
IF YOU SAY THAT...
WELL, ONCE YOU COME THIS FAR, THE MATCH IS ALL ABOUT LUCK.

			Manabu Eiichirou	Hiroto Narihiya	Futaran
Mentality	Strength of Mind		A	B	
	Power of Judgement		A	C	
	Stragetic Ability		B	B	
Technique	Stroke	Fore hand	Topspin	B	B
			Flat	B	B
			Slice	B	B
		Back hand	Topspin	B	B
			Flat	B	B
			Slice	B	C
	Serve	Fore side	Spin	B	B
			Flat	B	B
			Slice	B	C
				B	C


DEPENDING ON THE SITUATION, HE MOVES TO THE NET,
AND USES BOTH SERVE & VOLLEY AND RETURN DASH...
HE MIXES FLAT, TOPSPIN, AND SLICES FOR HIS STROKES...

. AND HIS STRONG MENTAL STRENGTH.
THE THINGS TO BE CAUTIOUS ABOUT ARE HIS ACCURATE CONTROL,
HE CHANGES THE PACE BY COMBINING ALL THESE, AND CRUMBLES THE OPPONENT'S FLOW...

フラット B B B
ライス B B C
イ B B B
B B B
イ B B B
B B B
クロス B B B
逆クロス B B B
他 ドロップ ショット B C C
ボレー B C C
HE MUST HAVE TRIED EVERYTHING HE CAN SINCE THEN WITHOUT COMPROMISE.
I CAN SYMPATHIZE A LOT ON THOSE ASPECTS...
THESE THINGS ARE SUPPORTING HIS RAPID GROWTH.
TO HAVE STARTED TENNIS IN HIGH SCHOOL... HIS SPEED OF GROWTH IS ON PAR WITH TAKUMA-KUN DURING MIDDLE SCHOOL.
THEN THERE'S IKE SOUJI...
ARAYA AND OKADA AFTER ENTERING HIGH SCHOOL...
AND THE RECENT IDE IS ALSO INCREDIBLE,
BUT THE CURRENT MARUO-KUN IS BEYOND THAT.
IF I LOOK AT IT LIKE THAT, I DON'T WANT TO LOSE.
THAT'S RIGHT. MARUO-KUN IS THE BIGGEST THREAT SINCE IKE SOUJI.

QF
SF
F
KANTO
JUNIOR TENNIS
COMPETITION
DAY-5...
荒谷 寛
6-2 6-1
岡田 隆行
6-0 6-2

THIS IS NO.30, MARUO EIICHIRO.
THE SEMI-FINALS WILL BEGIN!!

KANTO JUNIOR
WOMEN UNDER
18 TOP 4
1st Seed
Takasaki
Natsu
2nd Seed
Hatayama
Miya
3rd Seed
Saitou
Takako
5th Seed
Abe Ririka

Baby Steps

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MANGA scanlations
imangascans
rc.rchighway.net

Baby Steps

ベイビーステップ

RAWs: Share
Cleaner: Stark & MrHame
Translator: Ruggia
Typesetter: CraN
Proofreader: Reika
Q-Checker: LordLestat

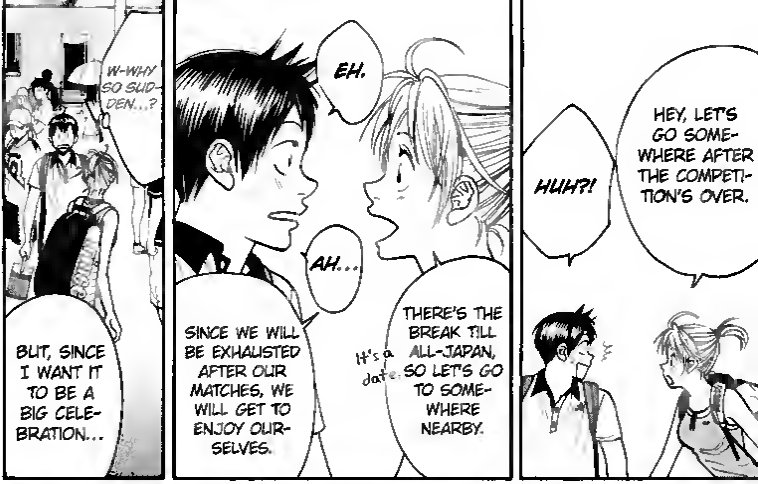
#167: COMPILATION
IT'S NOW 10 O'CLOCK. WE WILL COMMENCE THE SEMI-FINALS OF THE KANTO JUNIOR TENNIS COMPETITION.
FOR THE PLAYERS, PLEASE START WARMING UP AT YOUR ASSIGNED COURT.
ALRIGHT!!

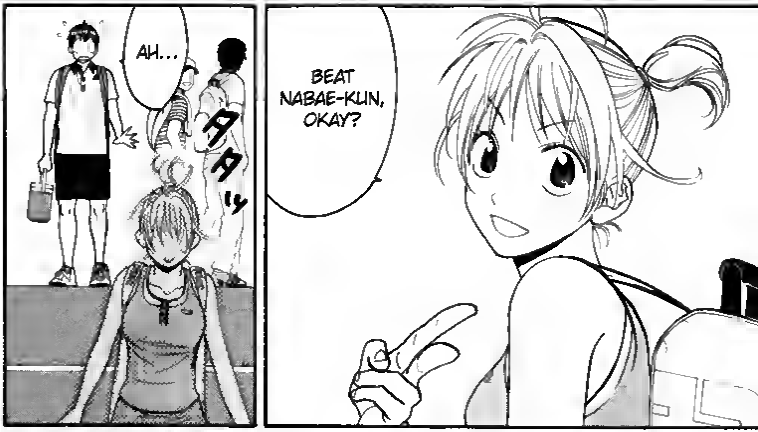
IN ORDER SECURE MY VICTORY THERE.
THREE WEEKS LEFT TILL ALL-JAPAN JUNIOR...
I NEED TO BEAT HIM NOW...!
prince
I'M NOT JOKING..
I'M IN THE TOP 4.
prince

YEAH... I ALSO WASN'T EXPECTING ME TO GET THIS FAR THIS QUICKLY...
AMAZING?
WAIT, ISN'T THAT...
I can't help it because I'm your parent.
.....
But I'm also worried about you getting stronger..
..You really have gotten strong, huh.
N-NUMBER 1 IN JAPAN...
IF I MANAGE TO BEAT HIM...
WILL YOU STILL BE WORRIED, MOM?
B-BUT... I'LL BE PLAYING THE NO.1 PLAYER IN JAPAN TOMORROW.
princc

But will that person... be able to continue succeeding even after he becomes a pro?
OF COURSE!
ALMOST EVERYONE WHO'VE WENT THAT FAR AT THE JUNIOR
BECAME PROFESSIONAL PLAYERS,
AND EVEN IF THEY DIDN'T, THEY ARE ALL DOING WELL IN A TENNIS-RELATED JOB.
I see...
Then... if you really win against that person,
I might reconsider... about you playing tennis...
REALLY?!
YES!
But if that happens, I'm gonna go watch you play, okay?
If it's the finals, I should be able to go.
OKAY! GOT IT!

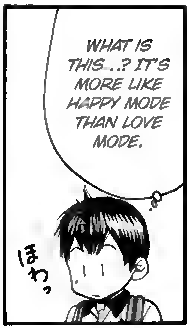
IF I CAN BRING OUT EVERYTHING I'VE LEARNED SO FAR...
But...
How are your chances against that person?
THERE'S A CHANCE THAT I'LL WIN...!
GRIP
NAC-CHAN?

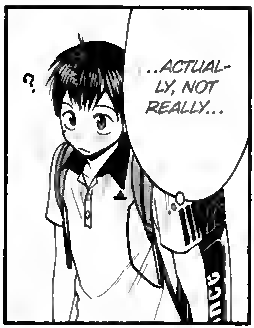

W-WHY SO SUDDEN...?
BUT, SINCE I WANT IT TO BE A BIG CELEBRATION...
EH.
AH...
SINCE WE WILL BE EXHAUSTED AFTER OUR MATCHES, WE WILL GET TO ENJOY OURSELVES.
It's a date.
THERE'S THE BREAK TILL ALL-JAPAN, SO LET'S GO TO SOMEWHERE NEARBY.
HUH?!
HEY, LET'S GO SOMEWHERE AFTER THE COMPETITION'S OVER.

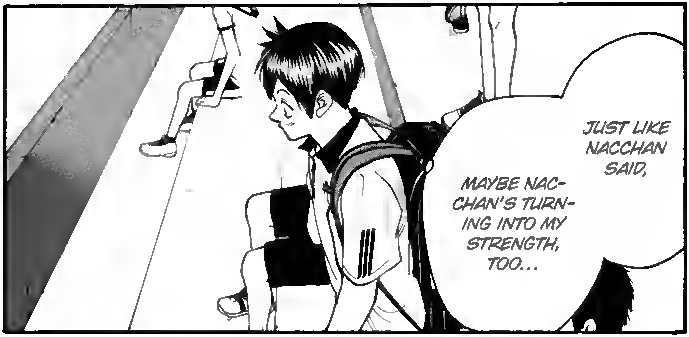

AH...
BEAT NABAE-KUN, OKAY?

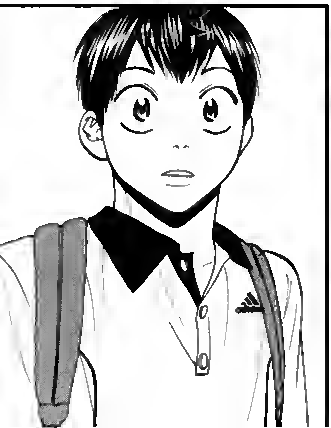
MY BATTLE MODE IS TURNING INTO LOVE MODE...
I-I'M EXCITED... BUT WHY ALL OF A SUDDEN?

I'M SURE YOU WILL.

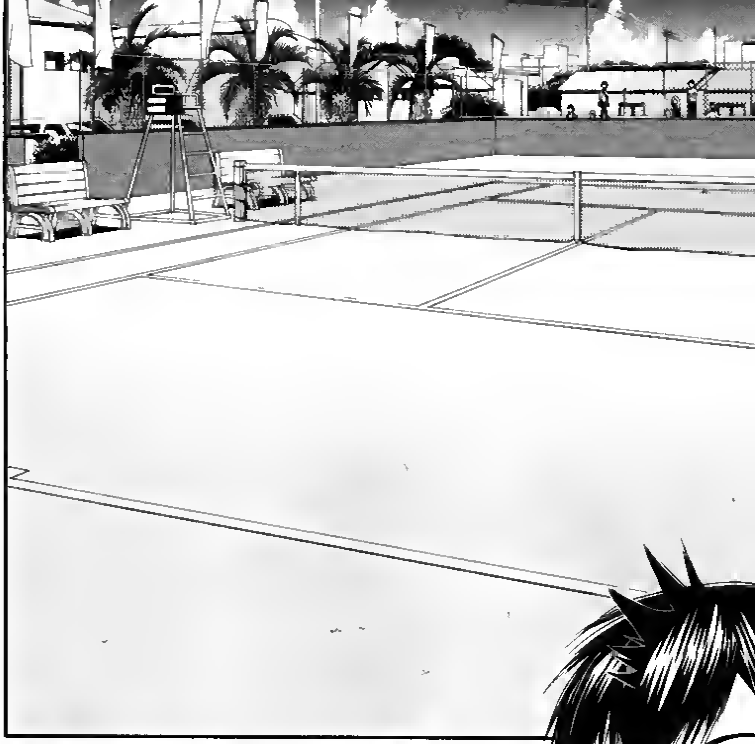

WHAT IS THIS ..? IT'S MORE LIKE HAPPY MODE THAN LOVE MODE.
ほわっ

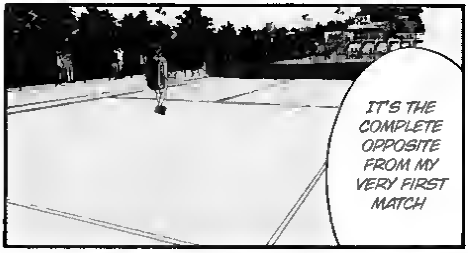

..ACTUALLY, NOT REALLY...
?


JUST LIKE NACCHAN SAID,
MAYBE NACCHAN'S TURNING INTO MY STRENGTH, TOO...



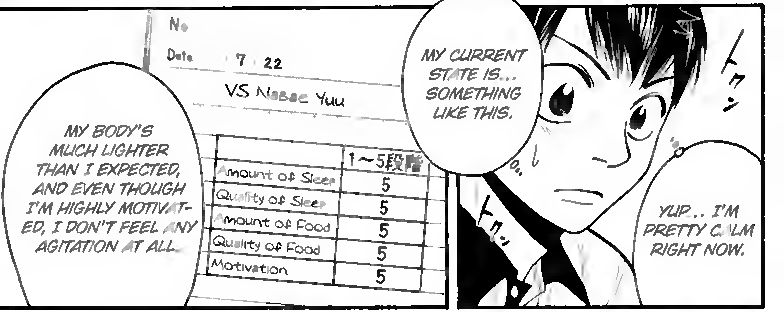
...THAT WOULD BE GREAT.



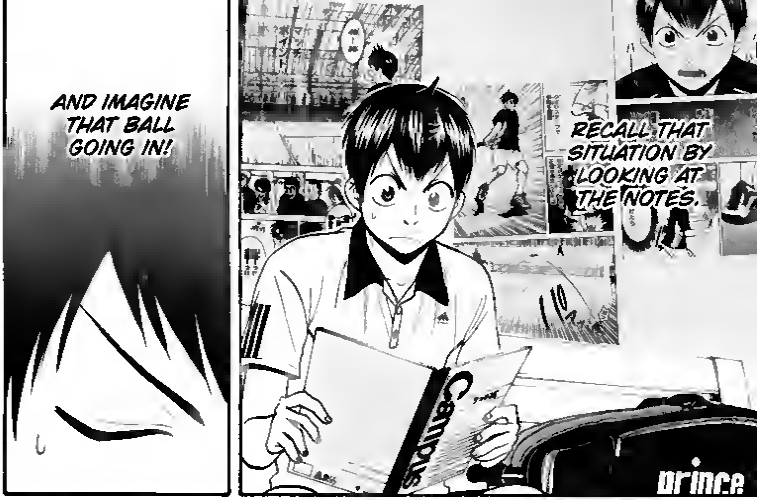

IT'S THE COMPLETE OPPOSITE FROM MY VERY FIRST MATCH

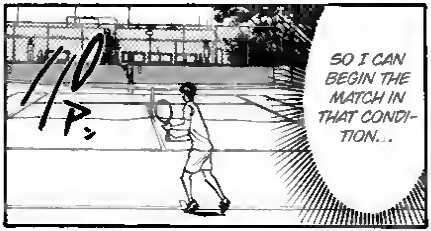
HUH...? THE COURT FEELS SMALLER.

ザワ
ザワ


No.
Date 7 / 22
VS Nissac Yuu
1~5段階
Amount of Sleep 5
Quality of Sleep 5
Amount of Food 5
Quality of Food 5
Motivation 5
MY BODY'S MUCH LIGHTER THAN I EXPECTED, AND EVEN THOUGH I'M HIGHLY MOTIVATED, I DON'T FEEL ANY AGITATION AT ALL.
MY CURRENT STATE IS... SOMETHING LIKE THIS.
YUP.. I'M PRETTY CALM RIGHT NOW.

THAT TIME, MY MENTAL STATE WAS SO STRONG THAT I EVEN THOUGHT I'LL BE ABLE TO WIN.
よくやって
LAST YEAR, I LOST BECAUSE MY BALL WAS CALLED OUT.
BUT THAT WAS A MISS CALL, AND IT WAS ACTUALLY IN.
アウト!


AND IMAGINE THAT BALL GOING IN!
RECALL THAT SITUATION BY LOOKING AT THE NOTES.
prince

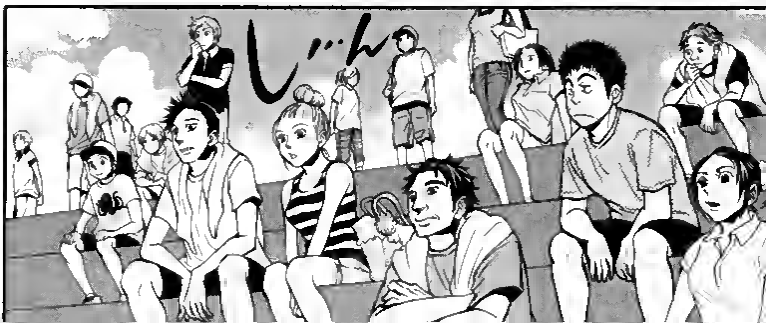

SO I CAN BEGIN THE MATCH IN THAT CONDI-TION...

5 MINUTE WARM UP TIME.

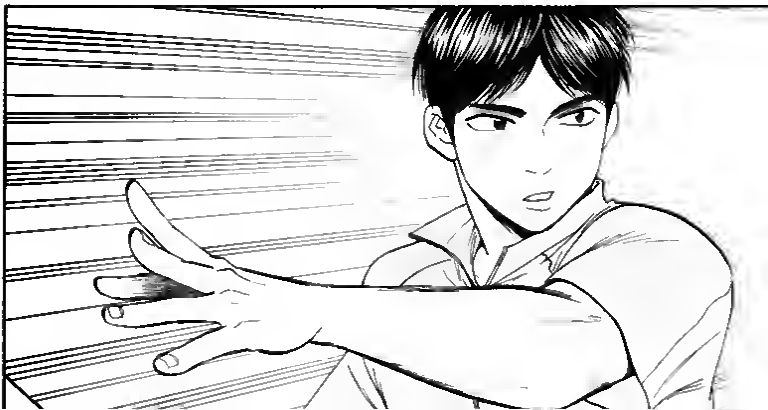
I AM THE CHAL-LENGER.
SO I WILL TRY EVERY-THING I HAVE LEARNED SO FAR!!

Pressure comes from the urge
Anger won't lead to victory
Devastation
Anger
Pressure
Challenge
NOW, WE WILL COMMENCE THE KANTO JUNIOR TENNIS COMPETITION, SEMI-FINALS!
3 SET MATCH. NABAE, SERVICE PLAY!

LET'S HAVE A GOOD MATCH.


し…ん

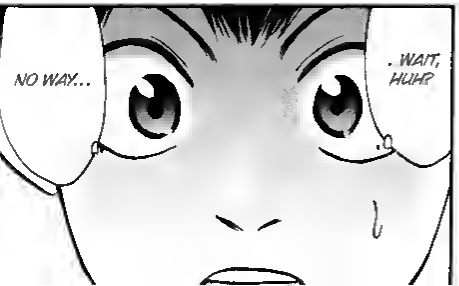
A WIDE SLICE!
...IT'S REALLY SHARP AS EX-PECTED!

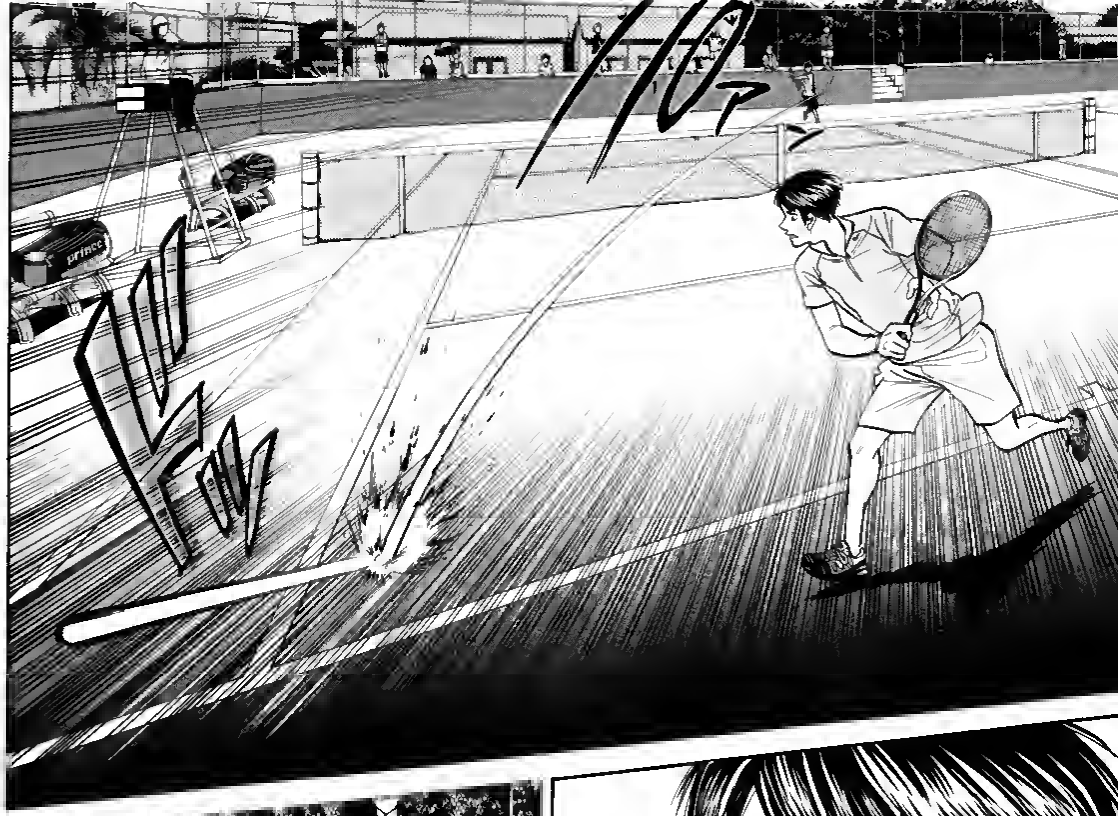


...AL-
READY!
BUT THIS
IS MY
RETURN
GAME...
I AM
THE CHAL-
LENGER!
WITH
HIGH
RISK...
181!!

HEY, WAS THAT A FLUKE?
WOW, THAT WAS SUPERB~
IT WAS SUPER CLEAN!

SO MY ENTIRE WEIGHT WAS ON THAT BALL.
I WAS ABLE TO SET MYSELF UP EARLIER THAN EXPECTED.
...SO I CAN HIT THESE SORT OF BALLS WHEN THINGS WORK OUT.


NO WAY...
. WAIT, HUH?


prince

!!
0 - 15

!

THAT WASN'T HIS USUAL BALL.
HE SEEMS TO BE IN A PRETTY GOOD STATE.

...NEXT!
NO... CALM DOWN.

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Baby Steps

ベイビーステップ

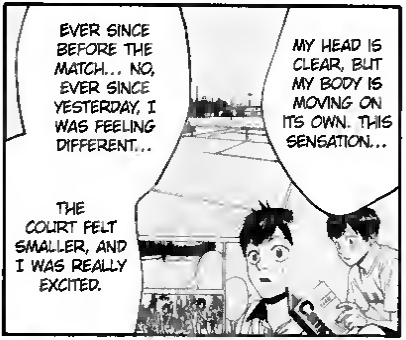
RAWs: Share
Cleaner: Stark & MrHame
Translator: Ruggia
Typesetter: CraN
Proofreader: Reika
Q-Checker: LordLestat

#168: VALUABLE DATA

HA
0 - 30
HUH?!
NABAE COULDN'T MOVE A STEP... ARE YOU SERIOUS?
H-HEY.. WHAT'S GOING ON?!

I AM VERY CLOSE TO THE ZONE RIGHT NOW!..

I KNEW IT!


EVER SINCE BEFORE THE MATCH... NO, EVER SINCE YESTERDAY, I WAS FEELING DIFFERENT...
MY HEAD IS CLEAR, BUT MY BODY IS MOVING ON ITS OWN. THIS SENSATION...
THE COURT FELT SMALLER, AND I WAS REALLY EXCITED.

I DON'T KNOW WHY, BUT...
THERE'S NO DOUBT ABOUT IT.

I HAD A PRETTY GOOD IDEA ABOUT MARUO-KUN'S STYLE, SO I WAS GOING TO ATTACK HIM FIRST, BUT...
HE'S UNUSUALLY AGGRESSIVE, AND UNHESITANT.
IF NOT, THERE'S NO WAY I WOULD BE ABLE TO DOMINATE NABAE-KUN ON HIS SERVE SO WELL....
IT CAN'T BE HELPED.. THERE ARE TIMES LIKE THIS, TOO
スッ

HE'S LOWERING THE PACE WITH A SPRINGING TOP-SPIN?!
HIS TOPSPIN IS... DEEP
HA

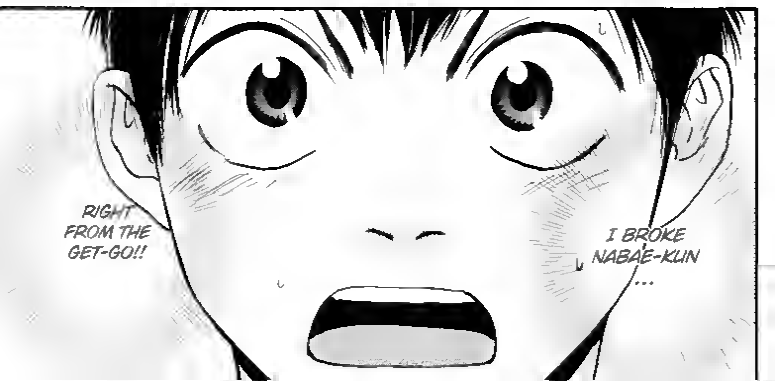
ハイ！
ガッ
！
ズッ

HA
0 - 40
HE'S COMPLETELY OWNING NABAE!!
TURNING AROUND FOR A FINISH....

I'M FOCUSED ONLY ON MY OPPONENT IN FRONT OF ME...
YUP, JUST AS I THOUGHT!
AND I'M NOT THINKING ANYTHING ELSE.
IN THESE SITUATIONS, I'LL JUST LOOK AT MY OPPONENT AND WHAT'S ON THE COURT,
AND TRUST MY INSTINCTS TO MAKE THE RIGHT DECISIONS.

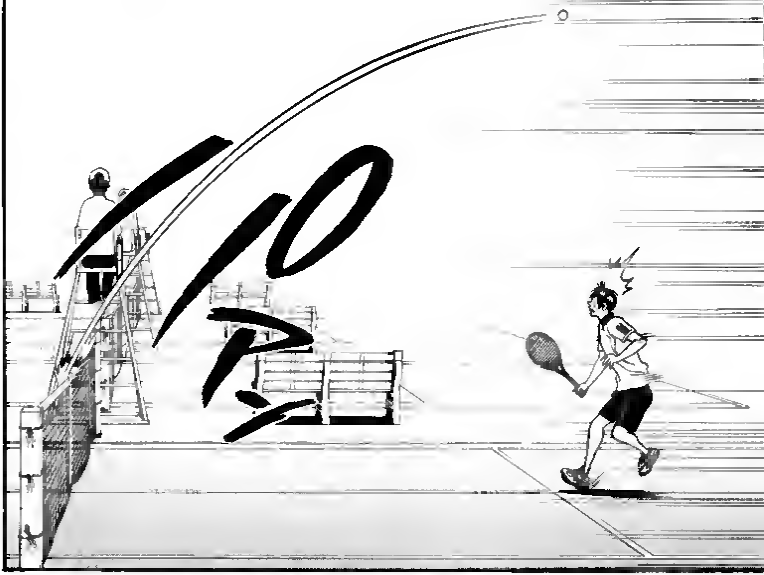
GAME, MARUO. COUNT: 1 - 0.

YES!


RIGHT FROM THE GET-GO!!
I BROKE NABAE-KUN ...

I KNEW HE WAS IN A GOOD CONDI-TION, BUT I WASN'T EX-PECTING HIM TO BE THIS GOOD.
MARUO'S TOTALLY OWNING THE GAME, BUT THIS CAN'T LAST THAT LONG, RIGHT?
WHAAAT?! I CAN'T BELIEVE HOW THIS STARTED...
HE'S VERY CLOSE TO THE OPTIMAL CONDITION HE SHOWED IN IDE'S MATCH.
I'LL HIT MY SERVE TO WHERE MY INSTINCT TELLS ME TO...
IT'S TROU-BLESOME IF HE STARTS THE MATCH LIKE THIS...

A FLAT WENT IN!
HA
IT'S SUD-DENLY ON THE NET!


ポン

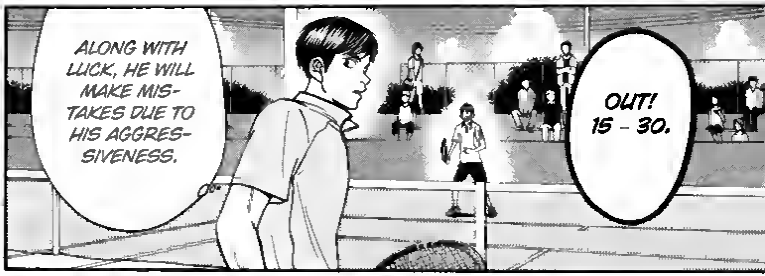
My bad
0 - 15

EVEN IF IT WAS LUCK, I MANAGED TO GET A POINT.

AH...
FI!

THAT WAS JUST UN-LUCKY.. IT CAN'T BE HELPED.
MARUO-KUN IS AT HIS VERY BEST CONDITION.
IT WON'T BE EASY TO BREAK HIM.

ドッ
HA
BUT IT DOESN'T MEAN I CAN'T GET EVEN A SINGLE POINT.


ALONG WITH LUCK, HE WILL MAKE MISTAKES DUE TO HIS AGGRESSIVENESS.
OUT! 15 - 30.

HA
AND EVEN FOR PEOPLE LIKE MARUO-KUN WHO DOESN'T HAVE A SET ATTACK PATTERN,
I CAN SLOWLY SEE HIS "PREFERENCE" FOR TODAY.

AGAINST DEEP TOPSPINS, HE PREFERS RETURNING IT WITH A SIMILAR BALL...
WHEN HE'S GOING FOR THE KILL...
HE TENDS TO HIT DOWN THE LINE.
HA

HE RETURNS WITH A DEEP CROSS.
FOR FAST VOLLEYS, JUST LIKE HIS STEADFAST PERSONALITY,

AL-RIGHT, KEEP!
GAME, MARUO. 2 – 0.

THIS TRUE NATURE IS THE MOST VALUABLE DATA.
IT WAS THE SAME FOR IDE AND ARAYA, TOO. YOU CAN SEE THE PLAYER'S TRUE NATURE WHEN HE IS EMOTIONALLY DRIVEN AND PLAYING AT HIS IDEAL STATE.

THIS IS THE MOMENT I CAN MAKE THAT MINE.
HERE, 1:100
Fly

0 – 15.
BUT HONESTLY... THIS IS QUITE SOMETHING.

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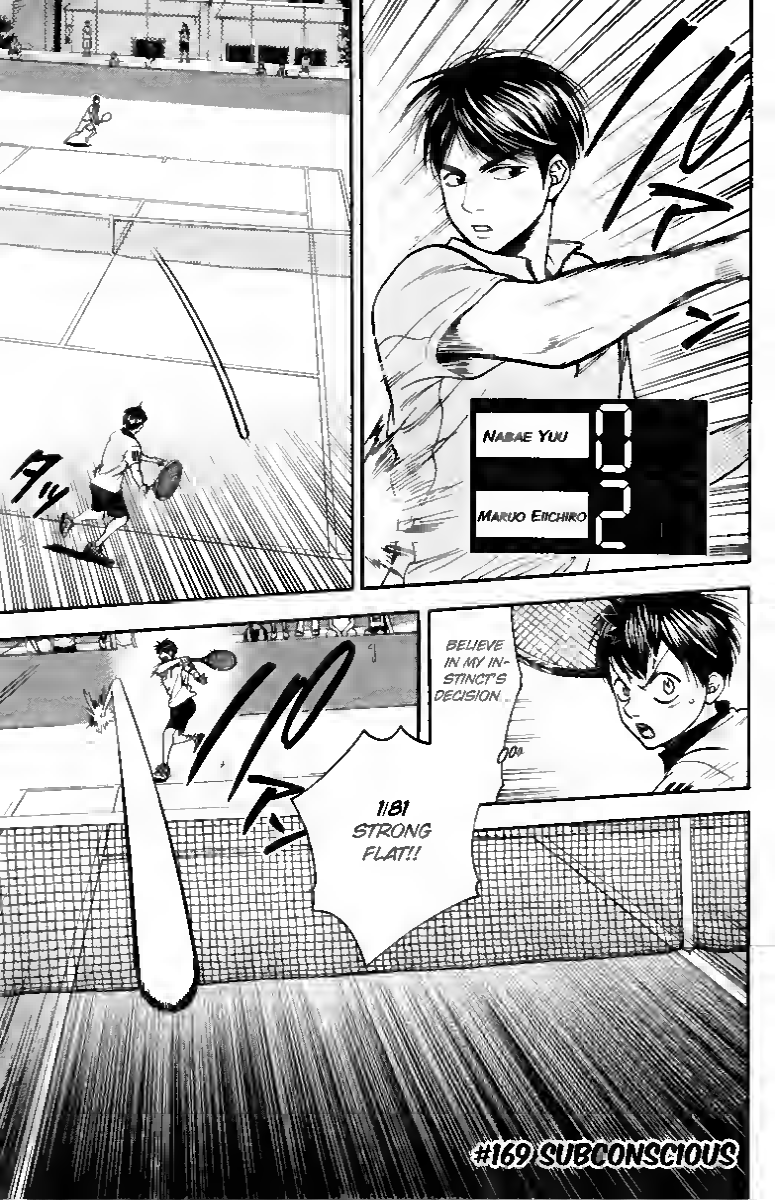
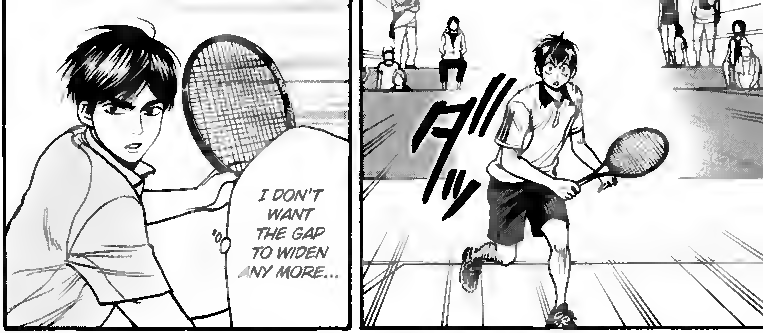
Baby Steps

ベイビーステップ

RAWs: Share
Cleaner: Stark & MrHame
Translator: Ruggia
Typesetter: CraN
Proofreader: Reika
Q-Checker: LordLestat


NABAE YUU
0
0
MARUO EIICHIRO
BELIEVE IN MY INSTINCT'S DECISION
1/81 STRONG FLAT!!
#169 SUBCONSCIOUS


I DON'T WANT THE GAP TO WIDEN ANY MORE...
ダッ

ズバーン

HA
GAME, MARUO. COUNT 3 - 0.
YEAH!!

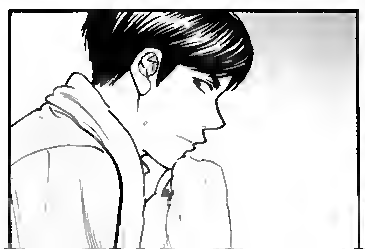
IS THIS...NO WAY, BUT MAYBE...
NO, NO, THERE'S NO WAY NABAE WILL ALLOW THIS TO CONTINUE!!

おお おお
OHHHH!! MARUO BROKE AGAIN!!

prince

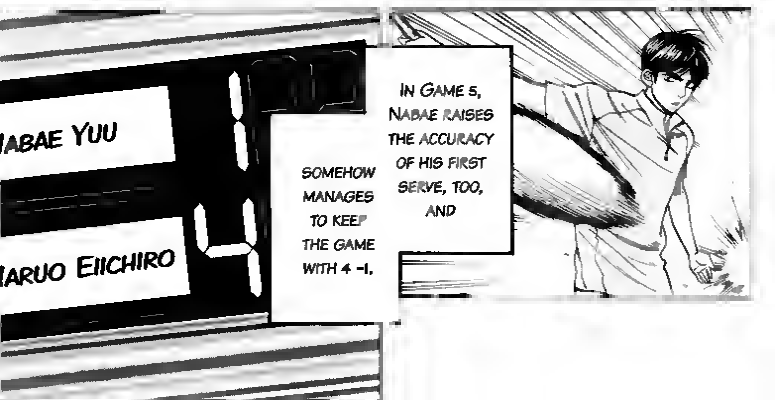
IT'S PROOF THAT THE CHANGE OF PACE I'VE BEEN PRACTICING THUS FAR IS WELL GROUNDED IN MY BODY.

I CAN LET MY BODY HIT THE IDEAL SHOT WITHOUT THINKING.
I AM PLAYING THE BEST TENNIS I HAVE PLAYED YET.

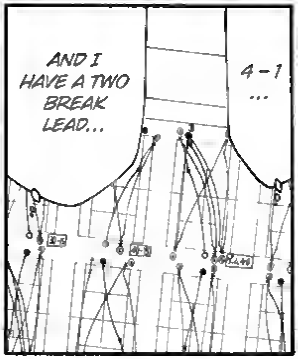


TIME!
AND THE FOLLOWING GAME 4.

EIICHIRO MAKES HIS FIRST SERVE AT 100% ACCURACY AND DOMINATES THE GAME.

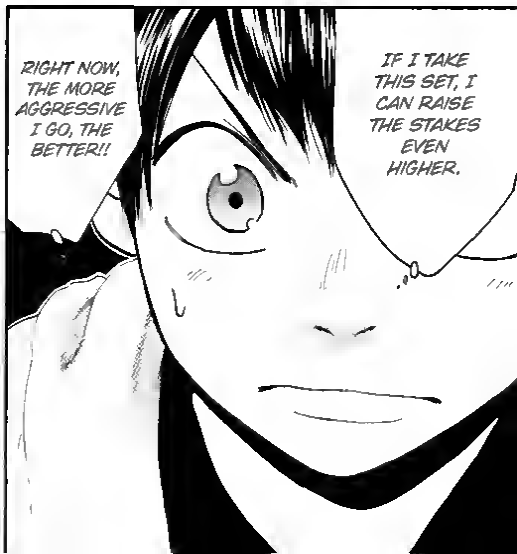

NABAE YUU
MARUO EIICHIRO
SOMEHOW MANAGES TO KEEP THE GAME WITH 4 -1.
IN GAME 5, NABAE RAISES THE ACCURACY OF HIS FIRST SERVE, TOO, AND

prince


AND I HAVE A TWO BREAK LEAD...
4 - 1 ...

SO THIS IS FINE.
NO MATTER HOW GOOD MY CONDITION IS, IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO BREAK ALL OF NABAE-KUN'S SERVES ..
カキ
カキ
カキ

TIME!
Ah


RIGHT NOW, THE MORE AGGRESSIVE I GO, THE BETTER!!
IF I TAKE THIS SET, I CAN RAISE THE STAKES EVEN HIGHER.

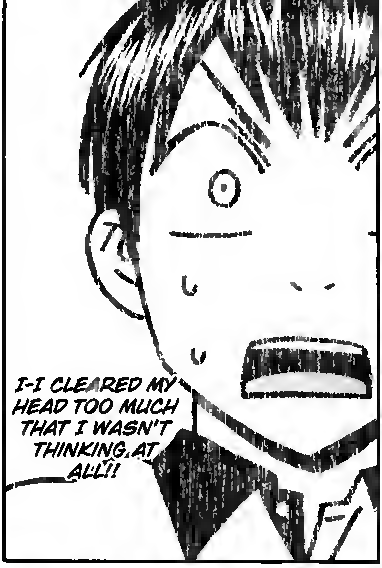
THIS IS TOTALLY BEYOND MY EXPECTATIONS, BUT IT'S NOT PURE LUCK...
THAT IS WHY I AM SCORING...
EVEN THE HIGH RISK SHOTS THAT I COULDN'T MAKE IN LAST YEAR'S MATCH ARE GOING IN RIGHT NOW.
IT'S THE FRUIT OF RELENTLESS WORKING TOWARDS MY GOAL!!
HA

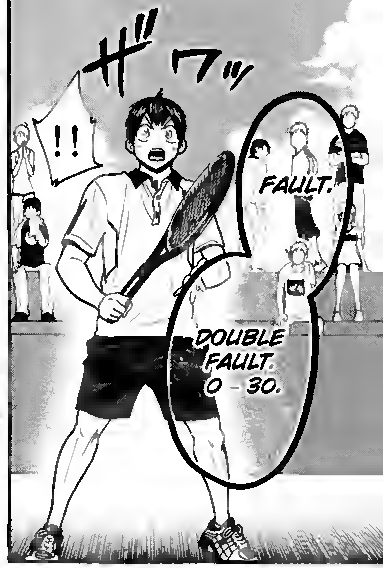
HUH...?
110
HA
NO.. FIRST SERVES AREN'T GUARANTEED TO GO IN 100%.
THESE ERRORS ARE THE COSTS OF GOING AGGRESSIVE

110 km/h
0 - 15.
HUH?
OHH... THAT WAS A NABAE-LIKE ATTACK JUST NOW.
YEAH... HIS RETURN GAMES HAVEN'T BEEN THAT GOOD SO FAR.
.....

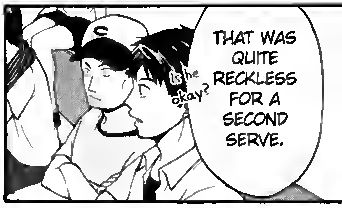
TAKE THIS SET I'M GOING TO RAISE HE STAKES EVEN HIGHER...
NO WAY... WAS IT WRONG FOR ME TO THINK TOO FAR AHEAD JUST NOW?
MMM...? SOMETHING FEELS DIFFERENT...
BUT WHAT?
IT CAN'T BE GOOD TO THINK TOO FAR INTO THE FUTURE.
ZONE IS A STATE WHERE I'M FOCUSED SOLELY ON THE PRESENT...
HA
DUNLOP
THINK ONLY ABOUT THE PRESENT FOR NOW...

IT'S OKAY.. ANYWAY, I HAVE TO CLEAR MY THOUGHTS ...
FAULT
BAM
CONCEN-TRATE ONLY ON THIS BALL...


I-I CLEARED MY HEAD TOO MUCH THAT I WASN'T THINKING AT ALL!!


!!
FAULT.
DOUBLE FAULT. 0 - 30.

HA


Is he okay?
THAT WAS QUITE RECKLESS FOR A SECOND SERVE.

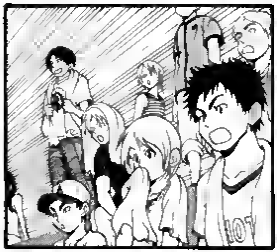
HE'S ONE STEP CLOSER!!
HE READ MY SPIN SERVE!!

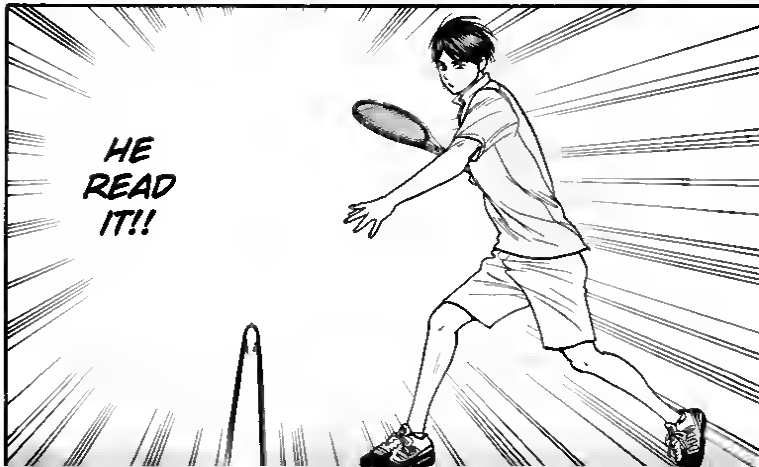
0 - 40
I COULDN'T REACT TO HIS MOVEMENT AT ALL... MY FIELD OF VISION'S TOO NARROW DURING MY SERVE.
HIS GEARS ARE STARTING TO FALL APART.
I DON'T ALWAYS HAVE TO BE IDEAL.
ONLY AT CRUCIAL MOMENTS IS FINE...
STAY CALM .. I SHOULD STILL BE CLOSE TO MY OPTIMAL STATE.

ハイターン
...CONCEN-TRATE!!
ANYONE WHO'S FEEL-ING INSE-CURE WANTS TO RELY ON PREVIOUS SUCCESS.
I CAN TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THOSE DATA RIGHT HERE.

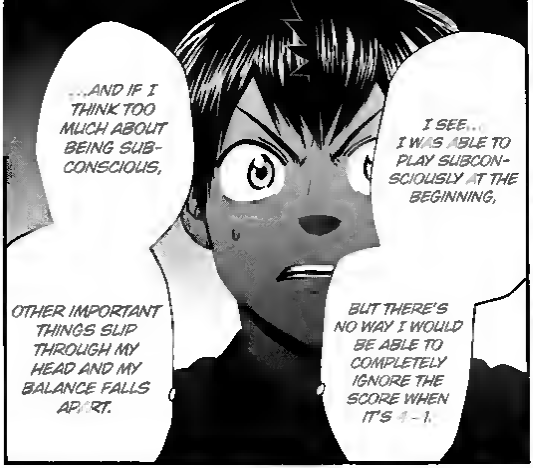
ハッ

DOWN THE LINE!!

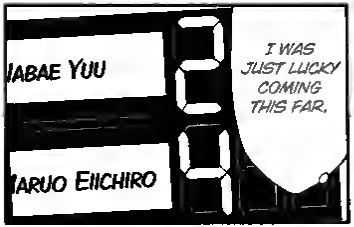


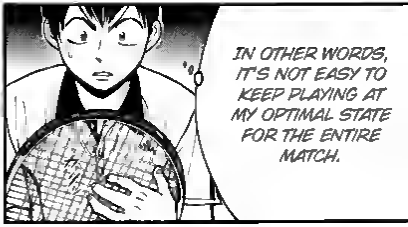

HE READ IT!!

GAME, NABAE. 4 - 2. MARUO LEAD.
IT'S HERE!!! NABAE'S BROKE BACK ALREADY!!!
ALRIGHT. FINALLY THINGS ARE GETTING INTERESTING.
WE WERE WAITING FOR THIS NABAE!!!


...AND IF I THINK TOO MUCH ABOUT BEING SUB-CONSCIOUS,
OTHER IMPORTANT THINGS SLIP THROUGH MY HEAD AND MY BALANCE FALLS APART.
I SEE... I WAS ABLE TO PLAY SUBCON-SCIOUSLY AT THE BEGINNING,
BUT THERE'S NO WAY I WOULD BE ABLE TO COMPLETELY IGNORE THE SCORE WHEN IT'S 4 - 1.

CRAP.


ABAE YUU
ARUO EIICHIRO
2
4
I WAS JUST LUCKY COMING THIS FAR.


IN OTHER WORDS, IT'S NOT EASY TO KEEP PLAYING AT MY OPTIMAL STATE FOR THE ENTIRE MATCH.

I'LL FACE THE SITUATION BY MYSELF AND SCORE POINTS WITH WHAT I'M CAPABLE RIGHT NOW!!!
I WON'T RELY ON THE ZONE ANY-MORE...

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Baby Steps

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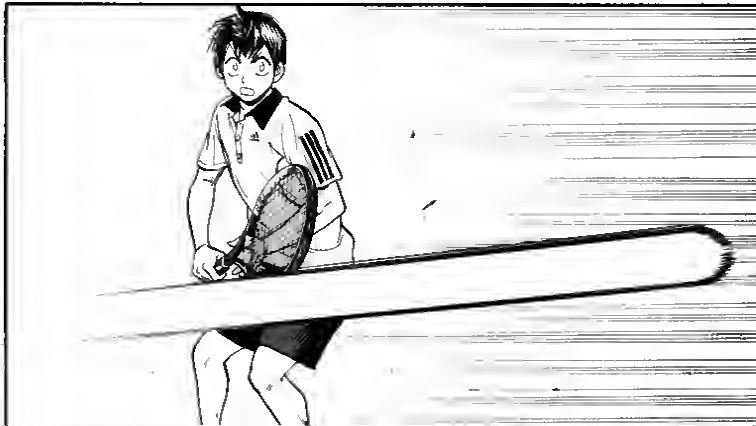
I SHOULD SHIFT TO A MORE PRACTICAL STRATEGY
IF I'M LOSING MY GRIP BY TRYING TO FORCE MYSELF INTO THE ZONE..
NAOAE YUU
MARUO EICHIROU
2
4
PREDICT HOW AND WHERE HE WILL HIT BASED ON THE PREVIOUS DATA AND THE CURRENT SITUATION..
Center 37.5%
Body 12.5%
Wide 50%
PUT 60% OF MY AWARENESS TO WIDE...

#170: THE CURRENT ME



HE REALLY IS AMAZ-ING...
HOW DID I BREAK TWO AGAINST SUCH A SERVE...?
おおっ
15 - 0.
RGH...
I NEED TO WATCH OUT FOR HIM DOING THE OPPOSITE NEXT TIME!
WAIT, THERE'S NO TIME TO BE PRAIS-ING!
!!
WATCH CARE-FULLY...

BUT, NABAE-KUN GOES TO SECOND SERVE 30% OF THE TIME ..
THAT WAS CLOSE ...
FAULT!
I'LL USE MY CHANGE OF PACE TO TAKE DOWN THOSE!
ドン!
SLOW TOP-SPIN WITH 1:64!!
OKAY.
ドッ!!

ざゅん
ビュー
THEN, A SLICE TO THE SAME PLACE...
ビュー
ズバーン

IF YOU HIT TWO BALLS WITH THE SAME SPEED TO THE SAME LOCATION, THE DIFFERENCE IN SPIN WILL MAKE IT HARDER TO GRASP THE TIMING.
TO THE...
SAME PATH...
TAKE THIS SLIGHTLY SHALLOW BALL...

HA
HIGH SPEED FLAT

15 - 15.
OKAY!!
I SCORED A POINT USING CHANGE OF PACE!
I CAN TAKE POINTS IN RETURN GAMES EVEN IF I'M NOT IN THE ZONE.

HIS TENNIS TURNED MORE LIKE HIS STYLE.
THREE TOTALLY DIFFERENT SHOTS ALL ON THE SAME SPOT...

DAH

I RE-TURNED HIS FIRST SERVE!

FIRST, A WEAK FORE-HAND TOP-SPIN DEEP DOWN THE LINE...

FOR A HIGH SPEED FLAT!!
THEN TURN AROUND QUICKLY...

ア
ン
ガッ
!?
30 - 15
THERE!!! NABAE'S REVENGE!!!
HUH?! HE RETURNED IT WITHOUT A SWEAT EVEN THOUGH MARUO'S SHOT WAS PRETTY GOOD, TOO

W-WHAT WAS THAT?
I WASN'T HITTING SOMETHING THAT WILL PUT ME IN AN ADVANTAGE...
BUT IT WASN'T WEAK ENOUGH TO GET RETURNING WITH SOMETHING THAT'LL TAKE ME DOWN WITH ONE STROKE.
パン
ブン
パン
パン
パン

HA
ヒュン
ヒュン

NABAE GAME. 4 – 3. MARUO LEAD.

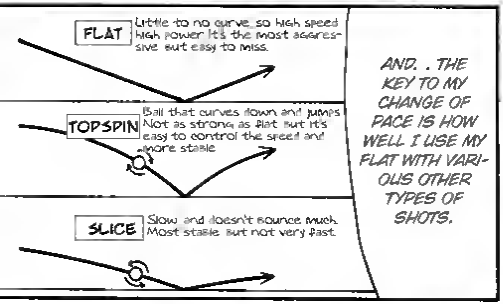
AGAIN!
!!

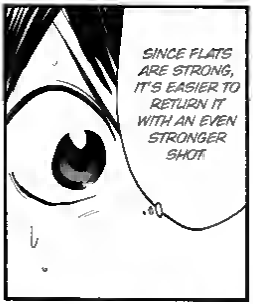
HERE IT IS! THIS IS THE NO.1 TENNIS IN JAPAN!!!
WOW, SO POWER-FUL!!!
NICE KEEP!!

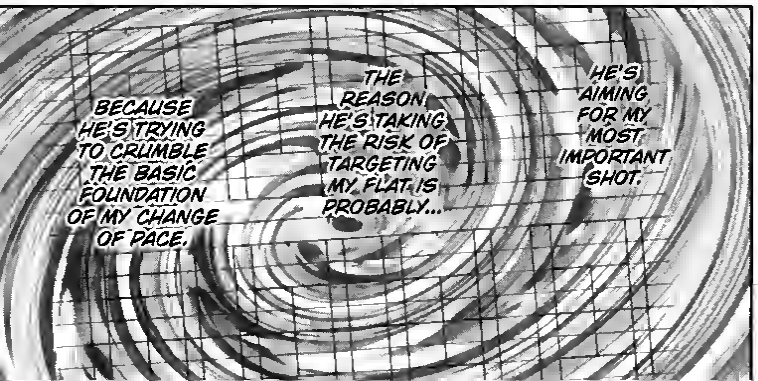
I GOT THE GENERAL IDEA WITH THE LAST ONE

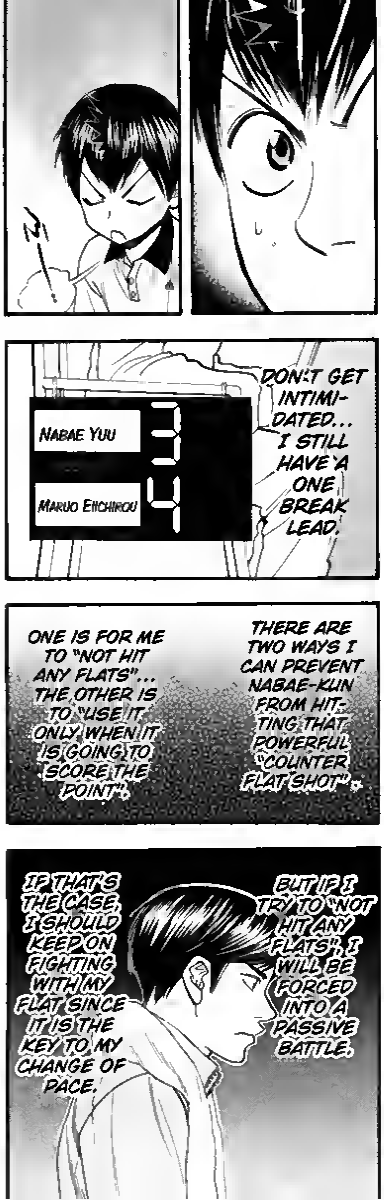
Spalding

NABAE-KUN IS TARGETING MY FLAT SHOT.

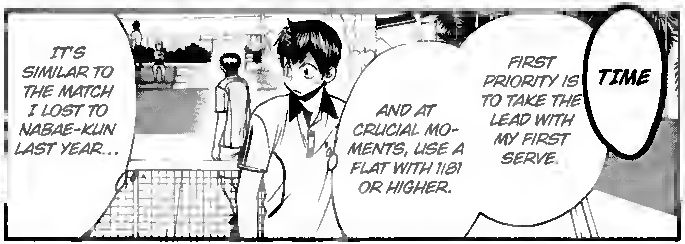

FLAT
Little to no curve, so high speed High power It's the most aggressive but easy to miss.
TOPSPIN
Ball that curves down and jumps Not as strong as flat but it's easy to control the speed and more stable
SLICE
Slow and doesn't bounce much Most stable but not very fast.
AND. . THE KEY TO MY CHANGE OF PACE IS HOW WELL I USE MY FLAT WITH VARIOUS OTHER TYPES OF SHOTS.


SINCE FLATS ARE STRONG, IT'S EASIER TO RETURN IT WITH AN EVEN STRONGER SHOT.


BECAUSE HE'S TRYING TO CRUMBLE THE BASIC FOUNDATION OF MY CHANGE OF PACE.
THE REASON HE'S TAKING THE RISK OF TARGETING MY FLAT IS PROBABLY...
HE'S AIMING FOR MY MOST IMPORTANT SHOT.


HE'S GOING FOR MY HEART AFTER GAINING A GOOD UNDERSTANDING OF MY TENNIS.
THIS IS NABAE-KUN'S TENNIS.
DON'T GET INTIMIDATED... I STILL HAVE A ONE BREAK LEAD.
NABAE YUU
MARUO EIICHIROU
ONE IS FOR ME TO "NOT HIT ANY FLATS"... THE OTHER IS TO "USE IT ONLY WHEN IT IS GOING TO SCORE THE POINT".
THERE ARE TWO WAYS I CAN PREVENT NABAE-KUN FROM HITTING THAT POWERFUL "COUNTER FLAT SHOT".
IF THAT'S THE CASE, I SHOULD KEEP ON FIGHTING WITH MY FLAT, SINCE IT IS THE KEY TO MY CHANGE OF PACE.
BUT IF I TRY TO "NOT HIT ANY FLATS", I WILL BE FORCED INTO A PASSIVE BATTLE.

GO FOR AN ACE!!!
IN OTHER WORDS, WHENEVER I HIT FLATS...


IT'S SIMILAR TO THE MATCH I LOST TO NABAE-KUN LAST YEAR...
AND AT CRUCIAL MOMENTS, USE A FLAT WITH 118! OR HIGHER.
FIRST PRIORITY IS TO TAKE THE LEAD WITH MY FIRST SERVE.
TIME

...BUT I'M DIFFERENT FROM BACK THEN!

I'LL DEFINITELY KEEP THIS!!!
HA

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Baby Steps

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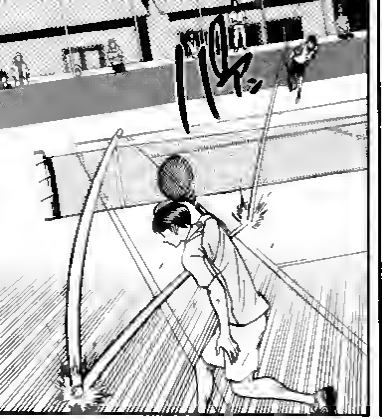
Q-Checker:
LordLestat

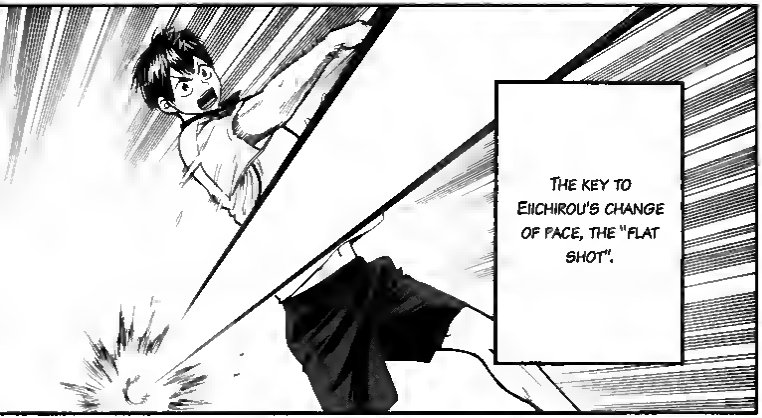
#171: LAST MINUTE POWER

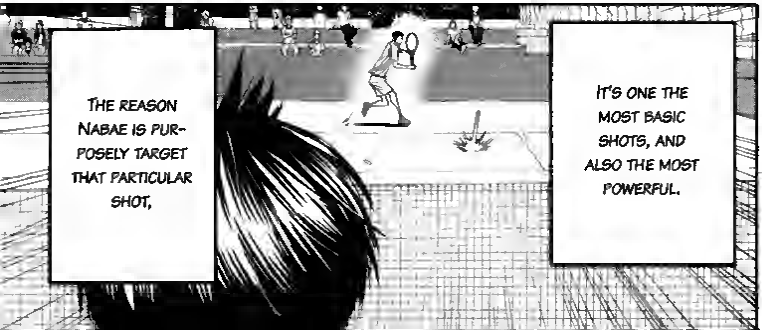
*Ace: Powerful shots where the opponent fails to touch the ball

!
OUT,
15 - 0.
GU!
THAT WAS DANGEROUS EVEN THOUGH A GOOD SERVE WENT IN PRETTY NICELY.



IT'S GOTTEN MUCH FASTER THAN LAST YEAR... AND IT'S PROBABLY NOT HIS FULL POWER YET.
HIS SERVE MIGHT BE HIS MOST POLISHED SHOT.


THE KEY TO EIICHIROU'S CHANGE OF PACE, THE "FLAT SHOT".


THE REASON NABAE IS PURPOSELY TARGET THAT PARTICULAR SHOT,
IT'S ONE THE MOST BASIC SHOTS, AND ALSO THE MOST POWERFUL.

ISN'T ONLY BECAUSE IT IS THE MOST EFFECTIVE STRATEGY.
BUT ALSO DUE TO HIS CONFIDENCE THAT HE IS STRONGER HEAD-TO-HEAD.

BEFORE THAT, MAKE THE FIRST SERVE!
EVEN IF I CAN'T GET AN ACE, IT SHOULD AT LEAST CRUMBLE THE OPPONENT'S BALANCE.
IT'S TOO WEAK... I CAN'T GET AN ACE WITH THAT.
IF HE RETURNS IT...
FAST BALL WITH SOMETHING OTHER THAN A FLAT!

AND WHEN THE TIMING IS RIGHT, USE A FLAT
TO GO FOR THE ACE!!
!?

BUT NOW, I HAVE AN EVEN GREATER CHANCE..
HE RE-TURNED IT!
ONE MORE!!

RGH

HE CAN CONTROL THE BALL EVEN WHEN HIS BALANCE IS COMPLETELY OFF.
THAT WAS CLOSE.
OUT. 30 - 15.
AS LONG AS HE CAN REACH THE BALL WITH HIS RACKET, HE CAN HIT THE BALL ANYWHERE HE WANTS WITH HIS LAST MINUTE POWER.
SINCE HE CATCHES THE BALL USING HIS FLEXIBLE WRIST AND RACKET MOTION,
HE'S FIGHTING WITH HIS FLATS RATHER THAN RUNNING AWAY.
MAYBE HE CHANGED THE WAY HE APPROACHES THE GAME
HIS CHOICE OF STRATEGY HAS GOTTEN A LOT MORE AGGRESSIVE.
NABAE-KUN CAN DO THIS BECAUSE HE THINKS OF HIS RACKET AS PART OF HIS BODY.

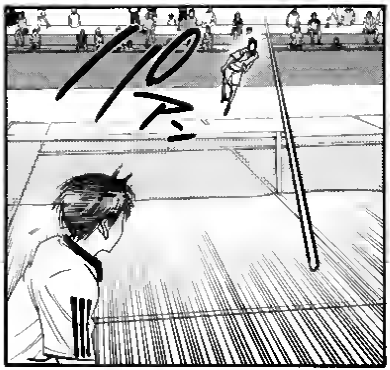
Eiichirou was having trouble with Nabae's last minute strengths,
This game turned into an up and down battle.
but thanks to 80% accuracy of his first serve,
Eiichirou somehow keeps!
Nabae Yuu
5
Maruo Eiichirou
he was also pressured by Nabae's strength.
Eiichirou reached the perfect position to take the first set, but

THERE ARE TIMES WHEN I THOUGHT I WAS IN THE LEAD WHEN I WASN'T OR MY FINISHING SHOTS GET RE-TURNED.
IT'S GOOD THAT MY FIRST SERVES ARE GOING IN, BUT...
THE MOMENT MY ACCURACY DROPS, HE WILL BREAK.
SINCE THAT'S THE CASE, I WANT TO BREAK THIS RETURN GAME NO MATTER WHAT.
RETURN GAMES ARE MEANT TO BE TOUGH...
USE THIS LEAD TO GO FOR AN ALL-OR-NOTHING BATTLE!!

15 - 0.
SHOOT .... IT'S THE OTHER SIDE.
HIS FIRST SERVES ARE GETTING MORE AND MORE ACCURATE.
THEN WHERE IS HE GOING TO HIT NEXT?!
Wilson

NOW THAT I HAVE THE UPPER HAND, QUICK ATTACK!!
!?
A WIDE... BULLS EYE!!

30 - 0.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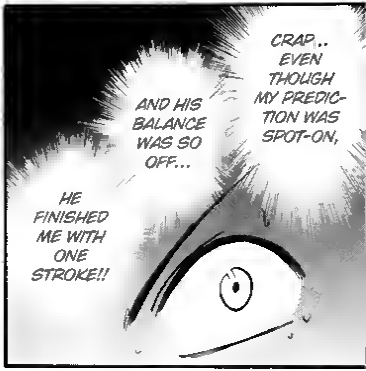
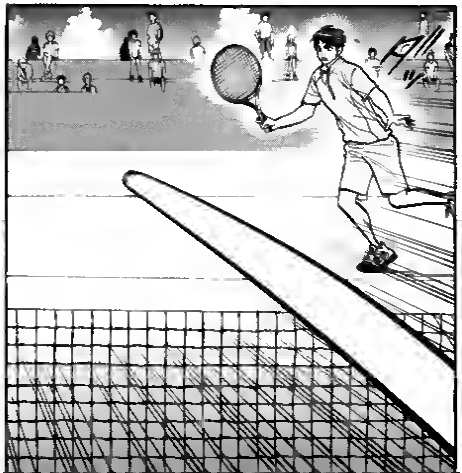
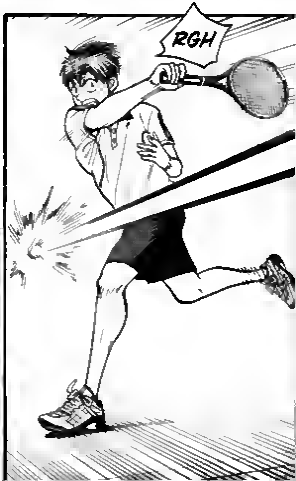
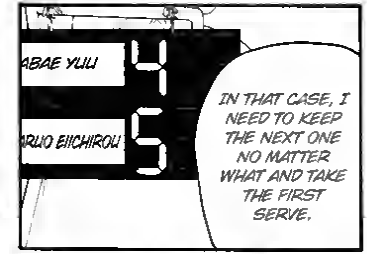

CRAP.. EVEN THOUGH MY PREDIC-TION WAS SPOT-ON,
AND HIS BALANCE WAS SO OFF...
HE FINISHED ME WITH ONE STROKE!!




RGH

ヒュッ
GAME, NABAE. COUNT: 5 – 4. MARUO LEAD.
I COULDN'T STEAL A SINGLE POINT...


ABAE YUJI
ARUO EIICHIROU
5 4
IN THAT CASE, I NEED TO KEEP THE NEXT ONE NO MATTER WHAT AND TAKE THE FIRST SERVE.

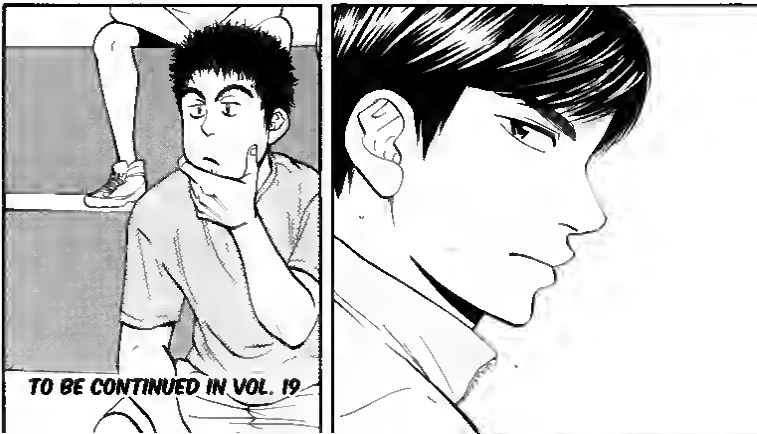
BREAKING AGAINST HIM FEELS HOPE-LESS..
IN RETURN GAMES, HE FINISHES THE GAME EVEN BEFORE I CAN HIT A FLAT.

IN THAT CASE.. WHAT SHOULD I DO?

BUT I BET NABAE-KUN WILL GO ALL OUT ON THIS ONE,
AND JUST LIKE THE PREVIOUS GAME, IT WON'T BE EASY FOR ME TO KEEP THIS.

DOING THINGS THAT YOU WON'T DARE TO DO UNDER PRES-SURE?
THEN WHY DON'T YOU TRY
THAT'S RIGHT. WE DISCUSSED A BUNCH OF STUFF...
ARE YOU... SERI-OUS?
OF COURSE
..LIKE WHAT?
LIKE THIS AND THAT.
IT'S DEFI-NITELY WORTH TRYING...
IF I'M GOING TO GET TAKEN OVER AT THIS RATE ..
I SHOULD RISK IT WHILE I'M STILL IN THE LEAD.
ドキ
ドキ

OKAY!!
TIME!


TO BE CONTINUED IN VOL. 19

Baby Steps

I TRIED MAKING THEM PLAY DIFFERENT SPORTS.
Her above-average height for a girl (around 170cm) and adventurous personality should be a good fit for volleyball
I guess 190cm won't standout that much in basketball
BabySteps
If he didn't start tennis, he might have kept playing soccer
His good eyes and analyzing skills should help But he might need someone like Kageyama to help him fit in with the team.

Baby Steps 18 Extra

SUMMER'S TEMPTATION

MAYBE THERE'S A FESTIVAL NEARBY?
THERE'S A TON OF PEOPLE IN YUKATA TODAY
You are right
On their way home from practice
WAIT, HUH?! YOU'RE GONNA FOLLOW THEM?!
フラフラ～
LOOK, YO-YO'S ♡
TA-KOYAKI PLEASE
WAIT, A SEC... SO FAST!!!
YEAH.. IT WAS A NICE WORK OUT...
ハーぜー
THAT WAS FUN!!!

Date

Good morning, everyone, this is Katsuki.
Thank you so much for picking up Volume 18.

The 4koma on the right is the one that was on Magazine Special two years ago. I totally forgot about it since then. If it's two years ago, we were at around Volume 9.

In the last volume, I wrote something like "Typical hero like Ide and the not-so Ei-chan", but I think it will be fun with a twisted protagonist like Takaki, too. But in that case, Ei-chan would be a pretty mean enemy.

Kanto Junior is finally in the semi-finals. Then see you next volume~

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DIAMOND NO ACE

BABY STEPS

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